

Contrasts
in the
Character
Of Christ

Frank E. Wilson

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Frank C. Wilson
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Oct. 25, 1916

**CONTRASTS IN THE
CHARACTER OF CHRIST**

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BY

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DEDICATED TO
MY FATHER

WILLIAM WHITE WILSON, L.H.D.
Late Rector of St. Mark's Church, Chicago, Ill.

Strong in the Faith, loyal to his Ministry, and in all things a
man of God.

PREFACE

JESUS CHRIST is still the key to the situation. This is the theme of this book.

Whatever valuation future history may stamp upon these early years of the twentieth century, certain it is that they will stand out as a period of experiments. We have a common tendency to give trial to almost anything which can boast a semblance of plausibility. "We'll try anything once" is a phrase indicative of our general open-mindedness. If it is an economic question which confronts us, we are quite likely to agree that the economic revolutionist has something to be said for his theories and we would not object to seeing them tried out. If it is a matter of social maladjustment, then the sociologist with the latest social panacea is bound to gain a hearing and we acknowledge that perhaps he is not so far off after all. If it is a point in theology or practical religion, then the man who cuts the knot with the sharpest celerity is quite certain to gain favor as the man who at least may have the right of it. With this attitude I have small quarrel, and chiefly for the following reason. As long as men remain open-minded, the Christian Gospel is bound to win its way. As long as men are willing to recognize the right and the good wherever they appear, then sooner or later they are bound to discover the full measure of them in the Christian

faith. Our inquisitive spirit, however, prompts us to peer over and around the things that have been in search of the things that are new. And while we look eagerly everywhere else, Christ still patiently awaits renewed recognition. While up-to-date schemes of human reclamation spring luxuriantly in our modern soil, the essential message of Christ still thrives and is quietly sinking its roots deeper and deeper into the life of humankind. The aim of this book is to point its readers to this ever-present Christ who is so easily overlooked, and to indicate some of the many modern points of contact in His everlasting Gospel.

The attempt to put this into the form of a book is due to the urging of some friends. In offering it I wish to acknowledge the assistance rendered me by my former parishioner, Mr. Edward Davieson, and also the advice and encouragement of my esteemed friend (who was also the stanch friend of my father), the Rev. J. S. Stone, D.D. Also I must not fail to acknowledge the help and encouragement constantly given by and gratefully received from my good wife.

The dedication offers another and final reason for the existence of this book.

F. E. W.

WILMETTE, ILL.

CONTENTS

I	INTRODUCTION	13
II	HIS POWER AND HIS MEEKNESS .	27
III	HIS SEVERITY AND HIS SYMPATHY .	45
IV	HIS COURAGE AND HIS GENTLENESS	63
V	HIS CONFIDENCE AND HIS DEPEND- ENCE	81
VI	HIS ENERGY AND HIS REPOSE . .	101
VII	HIS SIMPLICITY AND HIS KEENNESS	119
VIII	HIS RESOLUTENESS AND HIS PA- TIENCE	137
IX	HIS CHEERFULNESS AND HIS SOR- ROW	155
X	CONCLUSION	173

I

INTRODUCTION

I

INTRODUCTION

A GOOD sense of perspective is one of the best possessions a man can have. There are many other qualities which may be highly desirable, such as steady application, keen discernment, quick perception, etc. But it is one thing to be able to see things, and it is quite another to be able to see them in their right places. The man who has trained himself to take in easily and accurately the details of a scene or a situation has gained a very useful proficiency, but not as useful in the long run as the other man who may miss the details but who grasps the essentials in their proper relationship. And when these powers of observation are applied to men and women they require still more delicate handling. It is no easy thing sometimes to keep the important matters in the foreground and the less important in their respective places in the background, when one scrutinizes the characters of those one meets day by day. A small matter is likely to precipitate one's judgment of certain people, and they are promptly set down as such-and-such a kind in the catalogue of one's mind. Then there is often cause for much surprise when these very people are found doing something not at all in accord with the notion of them already formed. It has simply been a case of poor perspective, and the

14 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

possibility of contrasts in the same character has been forgotten. For the fact is, that contrasts are not only possible but are really necessary in every character. But their presence is usually responsible for the failure to understand people. One side of them is seen, and opinions are formed without due allowance being made for the other side which is not seen.

Therefore it has often been noted that it is difficult to judge a man who has gained prominence in his day, until a generation or two have passed, and his life and work can be seen through the intervening years, when he may be viewed from a distance in his place in the history of his time. That is true, of course, for the judgments passed upon contemporaries are sure to be biased one way or another by the critic's own interest in the issues of the day. But on the other hand, it is very easy in an historical retrospect to see men and women merely as well-defined cogs in the political, social, or economic machinery of their days, and forget that they were persons of many impulses and desires. This is a difficulty which historians have to face, and undoubtedly it has constituted a rock over which many an historian has fallen, only to smash into bits his previously constructed theories of history. They look back to certain historical figures and, having formed their opinion of them, they pin on each one a tag which shows the kind of man he was. Then, to their surprise, they find the record of a situation wherein one of these persons does not act at all in accord with the tag with which he has been labeled. Therefore they are obliged either to prepare a new tag entirely

or to deny out of hand the historicity of the incident in question. Bible characters, especially those of the Old Testament, have been subjected to more than their share of such treatment. An attractive theory, once accepted, may be overworked until ludicrous results call a much needed halt. The absurd extreme to which this theory may be pushed has been illustrated by applying it to men of the present age. By the same sort of critical deductions men of modern times have been ingeniously proved to be clear impossibilities. For instance, it has been shown how a hypothetical student of a few centuries hence would cleverly discover that Theodore Roosevelt was no man at all, but a personification of certain national traits of the American people. How could one man be both a great hunter and a great scholar at the same time, the critic asks? How could he be both a rough plainsman and also a conventional inhabitant of a large city? How could he be a leader in war, and at the same time one of the foremost advocates of international peace? This critic is made to declare such contradictory characteristics to be incompatible beyond all reason.

The truth is, it is impossible to hold down any one man under a single label. There should be several tags for every person. Abraham Lincoln was undoubtedly a man of kindly and forgiving disposition, yet he carried on relentlessly a very bitter and bloody warfare. George Washington was certainly a brilliant general and a courageous man of war, but he was also a constructive statesman and a man of peace. St. John Baptist proclaimed boldly and convincingly his commission

16 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

as a prophet sent by Almighty God, and was willing to suffer death rather than retreat from his position, yet he humbly gave place to the work of Jesus Christ when Christ appeared on the field. Violence will be done to one's whole knowledge of human nature if the reasonableness of such differences is not seen, for they are common to all people of all times. All men have qualities which stand over against one another, and different situations call for response from different ones of these qualities.

There is one rather important point of distinction which may act as a safeguard against much misconception in working out estimates of the characters of people either of this time or of times gone by. It is the distinction between contrast and contradiction. To the lexicographer it may seem a questionable differentiation, and considerations of etymology might not allow of too severe pressing. But there is a real distinction in the connotation of the two words. Contrast means difference where contradiction means opposition. A multitude of contrasts may be drawn without stirring up a single contradiction. Contrasts show diversity where contradictions show denial. Two contrasts may blend with perfect harmony, but contradictions are always at swords' points. Therefore contrasting qualities may easily exist side by side in any one character, but not so with contradictory qualities. A man whose character is full of contradictions is either a misrepresentation or an impossibility. Certain characteristics will be true, but their contradictions will be feigned. It is impossible for them to abide

together. A man cannot be an enthusiastic advocate of temperance and a drunkard at the same time; he cannot be an honest man and also a thief; he cannot be a gentleman and at the same time an evil-speaking blackguard. These are contradictions and are in a constant state of warfare with each other. If any two of these appear to be present in one character, then it is quite evident that one of them is being falsely assumed. But it is another matter with contrasts. The skilled warrior may be a real and effective peacemaker, for it is sometimes necessary to fight in order to maintain peace. A man may be naturally of a very retiring disposition, but at the same time he may be irrepressible in upholding the substance of his earnest convictions. Because a man is strong is no reason why he may not also be very gentle; neither is there any reason why a severe person should not be in sympathy with others. These are contrasts and are never mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they supplement each other, and the one is incomplete without its fellow.

It is the drawing together and interweaving of contrasts which give unity to character. A well-unified character is not one devoid of contrasts, but one in which they meet and operate with unanimity. If people had no differences at all, they would not only be afflicted with a deadly monotony but there could be no such thing as unity. For unity in anything is the gathering together of differences. That is necessary logically, for if there were no differences there would be nothing to be united. All things being made the same, identity is the result, but all possibility of unity is

18 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

precluded. That is where the intellectual reasonableness of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity comes in. This doctrine is not a statement of inherent contradictions, which obliges those who accept it to run counter to the calls of their own intelligence. Pure monotheism teaches identity in the Godhead. Trinitarianism teaches unity.

There is abundant field for thought along this line in the matter of Church unity also, a question which is receiving unparalleled attention at the present time. Absolute conformity is one thing and unity is quite another. The former has no prospect of achievement, and, what is more, wisdom will not desire it. The latter is somewhere in the future and, it may be hoped, not so very far away. When the day of real Church unity does come it will be discovered that all differences have not been expunged from various Christian bodies, but that all contradictions have, and on a basis of common essentials the differences will not only coexist, but will freely co-operate, with no energy lost by friction. There have always been differences of opinion in the Christian Church from the time when St. Paul resisted St. Peter face to face¹ down to the present day, and it will be a sad state of affairs when such differences become impossible. The two Apostles settled theirs into an amicable contrast, where St. Peter led the work among the Jews and St. Paul that among the Gentiles. Should the day come when all think exactly the same things, when every body of Christians and every adherent within every body shall hold to identical opinions and follow invariably

¹ Gal. 2: 11.

along certain well defined grooves of spiritual and ecclesiastical thought, then growth in the knowledge of the Gospel will have come to an end. If all think alike, there is no stimulus to think at all, and mental lethargy naturally follows. But where new ideas may challenge old ones, men of all opinions are driven to more active thought, and the result on all hands will be a clearer and more serviceable understanding of the questions involved. That must be one reason why a wise Providence allows differences of thought among those who are equally sincere about accomplishing the Divine Will.

So in the individual character contrasts are necessary to unity. We are taking it for granted that unity is desirable—that it is both preferable to, and more useful than, monotony on the one hand or unguided impulsiveness on the other. Variety within one's character is indeed the spice of life, but the variety must be unified or it will end in utter confusion. There is a possible false notion of consistency in this respect which might cause an imaginary difficulty, and which is therefore to be dismissed. It is by no means necessary, for the sake of consistency, to meet all situations and all people in precisely the same way. Because certain things are opposed at one time and strongly advocated at another is not necessarily a sign of inconsistency. It may be, but it is not necessarily so. For circumstances may have changed until a change in attitude becomes unavoidable. Consistency has to do with the principles by which various acts are governed. There must be some strong, sure, central point about which the whole of life

20 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

may revolve, and then one is consistent in so far as one makes everything tend in that direction. One dominant purpose surmounts all else and everything is brought into harmony with that purpose. It is possible to reach out at any number of angles without ever being torn away from that which sheds its significance over all, and there is no real danger of inconsistency.

This variety is well worth safeguarding, and the modern tendency toward specialization needs a bit of watching that it does not become a means of destroying it. It seems not an impossible contingency that men might become so restricted to special lines of work and thought that their general outlook on life would be correspondingly narrowed. It is true that what is everybody's business is nobody's business, that certain duties must be placed in certain hands in order that responsibility may be fixed, that the man who can do one thing well is much to be preferred to him who can do many things poorly, etc. There are numerous living witnesses to the fact that the man who tries to do everything himself will either kill himself in the attempt or will make a botch of the whole undertaking. But, at the same time, it is not fair to the individual that he should be obliged to develop a lopsided life in order to fill his place as a specialist at something or other. We are not pleading here for an outgrown individualism, but we are pleading for the value of the individual life. The ultimate unit in human affairs is the individual person. The individual man of course needs society to call forth many of his highest capacities, and he needs to accept his social obligations to keep

his life on sufficiently large dimensions. More than that, he will be morally at fault if he neglects or overlooks his privileges of service. The individual life is unfulfilled without its social development, but it is the individual life in its completeness which is the final goal of endeavor. Therefore individuals need wide and varied interests. They need not spread themselves out to cover so much ground that they will be really efficient nowhere at all. But the man who has a vision of things outside his own special sphere of work will do that work so much the better for the larger interests. It is possible for a physician to specialize so exclusively in some particular ailment that he will see signs of it in every case of illness he meets. The physician of less specialized and more general knowledge may on the whole be of more service to the average person. And it goes further than that. The general medical practitioner who devotes himself entirely to painstaking study of anatomy and medicine will probably be less able to minister to the needs of his patients than the one who through a lively interest in the economic and industrial conditions of the day will understand the extent of daily wear and tear which his patient's occupation lays upon him. So also with the workman who operates a great machine in a factory. He may know all the gears and bolts and rods of his machine and how to use it with remarkable dexterity, but if he also interests himself in the way in which the material upon which he works is made he will undoubtedly turn out better work; for, knowing his material, he will be able to tell more easily why certain irregularities appear

22 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

in his finished product, and will be able to adjust his machine with greater nicety to produce more uniform excellence in results. It is also true of clergymen in bringing spiritual help to members of a congregation. A man may devote himself exclusively to preaching and may become a very eloquent and proficient preacher, but he could probably bring far more help to his people through his preaching if he took time also for his pastoral work and through personal acquaintance came to know their peculiar needs as a congregation. Too much specialization may be as harmful to a man's truest efficiency as none at all. The variety of interests which go with character contrasts are invaluable to all kinds of men.

So when one's attention is given to a consideration of the character of Jesus Christ there are discovered there also, as might be expected, contrasts such as are common to human life, only developed into complete harmony. We have no intention in this volume of entering into a critical analysis of our Lord's character, for that is a dangerous proceeding at best. When a person begins to analyze people systematically he generally finds about what he started out to seek. The sense of perspective is likely to become confused. As a rule it is safer to trust the judgment of one who takes a comprehensive view of men and women than that of one who carefully picks them to pieces in order to give a more minute description of them. What one wishes to understand is not the component parts of one's friends, but the friends themselves as whole persons. For parts which may be unsightly enough when examined alone will present quite

different aspects when incorporated into the unity of a character. We shall make no such analytical attempt in these chapters. Our purpose is to select a few incidents out of the Gospel accounts which will illustrate certain contrasting characteristics in the life of the Master, and from them draw some practical deductions for our human affairs of the present day.

Neither are the following chapters meant to constitute an exhaustive study of the Gospels. There are undoubtedly other contrasts than those which are considered here, but we believe these to be sufficient to allow us to arrive at certain conclusions. We are not entering on any discussion of the critical questions which have been raised about various portions of the Gospel narratives, because our present purpose is not concerned with them. We have no wish either to disparage or slight the fruits of honestly critical scholarship, but in this case they are simply beyond the scope of this volume. We realize that certain parts of the Gospels are still under the careful scrutiny of expert Biblical students and that valuable information on these questions is being given out to the Christian world every year. We recognize that upon some matters final judgment must be wisely suspended until there is both more and more accurate knowledge upon which to draw. We know that the Synoptic problem is still a problem; that the relationship between the first three and the fourth Gospels is not always exactly clear; that there are many dates and places which must still be held in question; that there are many different views regarding the sequence of events described—and so on. But so far

24 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

as this discussion goes, these questions are simply set aside. We are going upon the reasonable assumption that, whatever questions may be raised concerning the authority or authenticity of any particular portions of the narratives, the Gospels as a whole give us a true and reliable representation of the character of Jesus Christ. Upon that assumption we take them simply as they stand. And we believe that even those who hold extremely critical views of the Christian records will find sufficient basis of undisputed facts in the points herein discussed to justify us in setting forth these various characteristics and drawing our contrasts between them.

So we open the pages of our Gospels and peruse them, seeking to catch the spirit of Him about whom the Gospel hangs and to determine a few points where His life touches the life of the modern world. The fundamental needs of humanity today are the same as in the days when He walked among men, and the same characteristics which made possible the complete life then will have equal efficacy today. Contrasts in character were necessary then just as they are now, and always they need to be bound into a strong unity. Therefore it is nothing astounding toward which our search is bent, but it is something very practical. It may be that we shall gather a few useful thoughts from a fresh consideration of some of the deeds and words of the Master of Life.

II

HIS POWER AND HIS MEEKNESS



II

HIS POWER AND HIS MEEKNESS

THAT Jesus Christ possessed a most extraordinary power goes without saying. The most severe critics of the Christian Gospel are bound to admit that if they admit anything at all. Men's ideas may vary as to the significance of His power, as to its origin and as to the purpose with which He put it into effect, but one cannot take Christ seriously from any point of view without granting, at the outset, that He wielded a power far above the ordinary. He spoke with power, He wrought with power and He lived with power. His was always a powerful influence wherever His life touched the lives of others. The sick, the lame, the deaf and the blind were brought to Him with their various petitions for relief and their infirmities were banished by a word or a touch. Even the dead were not beyond the reach of His mighty command. He said, "Follow me," and men forsook their daily tasks and followed Him, unable to resist the authority of His call.¹ With a word He quieted the storm-driven sea, when the disciples were on the verge of despair and, at the same time, disposed of their rather natural fears.² At His will the shifting waters became a solid floor beneath His feet.³ Blessed by

¹ St. Mk. 2:14.

² St. Mk. 6:48.

³ St. Mt. 8:26.

28 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

Him and distributed from His hands the five loaves and two fishes were multiplied to feed thousands of people.⁴ For months His enemies raged against Him, but, for all their eagerness, feared to do more than rage.⁵ The Gospel accounts are full of such instances, so full that it may be a matter for some surprise to come upon situations where His power is distinctly obscured. For, mingled in with all the many remarkable evidences of power there are a number of perplexing restrictions of it. He appears, upon one occasion, stirring up amazement in the minds of His followers by His marvelous works and then, upon another occasion, putting a distinct check upon it by a surprising curtailment of the power which made the works possible. If on one page of the Gospels are found striking illustrations of His singular power, on turning over the page there will be found many instances which stand in marked contrast to these illustrations. There were times when the Master silently withdrew into the hills where He might be quiet and alone in prayer.⁶ Many of His astonishing cures were followed by the strictest injunctions that the utmost secrecy should be preserved and no publicity given to them.⁷ When the unknown city of Samaria inhospitably refused Him shelter, He restrained the wrath of His disciples and quietly accepted their rejection.⁸ Not once, but several times, He calmly predicted the fearful end which men would bring upon Him.⁹ And at last He humbly took

⁴ St. John 6: 5 ff.

⁵ St. Luke 22: 2.

⁶ St. Luke 9: 51-56.

⁷ St. Mt. 16: 21, 20: 18; St. Mk. 9: 31, etc.

⁸ St. Luke 6: 12.

⁹ St. Mk. 8: 26.

His way up the hill of Calvary and uncomplainingly submitted to the disgraceful Cross.

There is at least one place where the two sides of this contrast are brought very closely together. On this occasion Christ had taken three of the disciples with Him up into the Mount of Transfiguration and there they had witnessed a unique manifestation of the power which lay within Him. Upon their descent from the Mount, there was awaiting Him a call for a practical expression of that power with which they had but recently been dazzled. It was the case of the epileptic boy with which the Apostles, for some reason, had been unable to cope. They had attempted and failed and now the unique power of Christ would be all the more evident because of their failure. Christ rebuked them for their want of faith and then, calling for the boy to be brought to Him, He cured him, to the great astonishment and delight of the onlookers. Here surely was One with the very power of God in His possession. There must have been a conscious sense of awe among the people in the face of such power. They were not frightened, but mystified and waiting eagerly to see what would happen next. They were plainly prepared for new wonders and certainly were in a very impressionable mood. To all appearances Christ might have had anything from the people which He might have chosen to demand. But, far from making any demands upon them, "while all were marveling at the things which He did, He said unto His disciples, Let these words sink into your ears: for the Son of Man shall be delivered up

30 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

into the hands of men.”¹⁰ Then St. Luke adds that they did not understand what He meant and hesitated about pushing their inquiries any further.

Naturally they did not understand. It was a most unlooked for statement for our Lord to make under the circumstances. Those to whom He addressed the words were His disciples, His followers who scarcely lost an opportunity to spread abroad reports proclaiming what a marvelous man this Master of theirs was. From one to another they would pass on their accounts of His wonderful deeds and they would urge their friends by no means to miss seeing and hearing Him, if ever He should come their way. Now, before this company, He had wrought a notable miracle which clearly went to substantiate all they had been thinking and telling about Him. He had fulfilled their expectations and proved the value of their hopes. One might readily imagine many of the spectators turning to their neighbors to say: “See! Just as we told you,” and one might note the nods of wondering acquiescence given in reply. What a surprise it was, then, when He effectually silenced their remarks with these mysterious words about the day when He should be “delivered up into the hands of men.” Was His power a delusion after all? Had their previous judgment failed them and were their very eyes playing tricks with them now? Had they made some absurd mistake which He, perhaps inadvertently, was correcting for them? His words had an ominous sound which, to say the least, dampened the glow of their zeal and disturbed their sense of happy gratification.

¹⁰ St. Luke 9: 43-44.

The wonder of it is, why, when He had all that power and it was being recognized by the people, He did not make the most of it at once and by means of it draw forth a deeper respect and stronger allegiance from the public. It seems almost like a splendid opportunity deliberately rejected. That certainly is what the average modern would have done. Given a power above the ordinary, he would push it for all it was worth and get the most he possibly could out of it. And that is just the reason why there are so few men of real power in the world today. That's the reason the really powerful man stands in such conspicuous prominence above the rest of mankind—because the vast majority of men do not grasp what real power is. Strange as the contrast may seem to be, there can be no true power without meekness inextricably woven into it.

Power without meekness is mere force and that can go just about so far and then it fails completely. The average person, with a bit of hasty contempt, is apt to sweep such a distinction unconcernedly aside. He mistakes meekness for weakness, for want of moral backbone, or for lack of energy. Really it is nothing of the sort. Meekness is the opposite of self-assertiveness. It means a good, healthy modesty; not a simpering self-depreciation, but a willingness to step into the background for the good of the cause. To some it may seem a useless kind of quality in these days of rapid work, when a man's efficiency is largely judged by his expenditure of nervous energy, or his ability to keep the atmosphere which surrounds his own work constantly surcharged with a spirit

32 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

of restless activity. Undoubtedly it seemed a fatal quality in the Master to many of His contemporaries as well. Yet it is because of His meekness that He has conquered the world. No Christian could very well imagine the Saviour in a haughty, domineering attitude, wielding a power before which all men must fall. Christ as an autocrat imperiously demanding His own way by virtue of His unparalleled power, could never be accepted as the Divine Redeemer of men. His meekness allowed a temporary defeat, but it resulted in ultimate victory. The Gospel, without its message of meekness, would be weak just where it most needs to be strong.

That this is not a matter of mere speculation is demonstrated in the relentless faith of the Moslem. Mohammedanism is a religion of unmitigated power and the consequences which flow from that fact are natural and logical. The God of Mohammed was pre-eminently a God of power and therefore Mohammed spread his message by force of arms. Meekness finds no place in Islam. To be sure "submission" (Islam) is the watchword of the Moslem, but it is a submission bereft of any touch of humility. In spite of the title "merciful God" so often applied to Allah in the Koran, nevertheless there is scarcely a modicum of mercy in any Christian sense to be discovered. One must submit to Allah because Allah has the power to make or break one's happiness. He is never to be served from a sense of love or devotion, but because He holds the whip-hand and, by His own might, can impose His unalterable demands upon His subjects. Consequently the Moslem must per-

form his prescribed duties, not because they are good, but simply because Allah has so commanded. "Right is right, not because of its essence, but because Allah decrees it. Hence Mohammedan predestination is arbitrary in its absoluteness, acquiring the force of fatalism. The practical result was the inspiration of a magnificent but terrible courage."¹¹ Always it is the power of God and His unadulterated justice which are the chief points of this faith and such a faith manifests itself in an iron-hearted cruelty, an insatiable selfishness, and an almost uncontrollable fanaticism. Following logically upon their own teaching, the man of power for the Moslem is the despot.

To Christian people despotism has become an impossibility. The Gospel is too thoroughly impregnated with the living spirit of freedom to submit to despotic handling. Any arbitrary exercise of power among Christians has been possible only where free access to the spirit of the Gospel has been severely restricted and where only so much of Christ's message has been taught as was considered expedient to those who held the reins of authority. In a Christian environment, the man of true power is the man, from whom meekness cannot be dissociated. Such men of power are always in demand and they are needed possibly a little more than usual in the twentieth century. Men of false power are in abundance—that is, men who, having obtained some degree of control over certain affairs, are willing and eager to press it to their own furthest advantage. There are rather

¹¹ New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge—Vol. 7, page 439.

34 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

too many among us today possessed of the idea of demanding their price. "I have such and such an amount of power," they announce, "I can exercise such and such an extent of influence and, therefore, I am in a position to ask such and such returns." The men are legion who are seeking to auction off their power and who are hunting for opportunities to strike bargains for exerting their influence in one direction or another. That is fatal to the true value of power. The moment men begin to put their power down on any such commercial basis, just at that moment they begin to undermine its effectiveness. Thanks be to God, there are still some things which cannot be computed in terms of dollars and cents.

Turned into the field of political activities it is this same mistaken notion which lies at the root of political corruption. There is undoubtedly a great deal of political dishonesty carried on which is really unintentional, but it is the outgrowth of this mistaken conception of power. And where dishonesty is deliberate it will usually be for the purpose of strengthening a power which is too weak to stand on its own merits. The politician, through party organization, is raised to a certain position of authority and is accorded the united support of a certain group of citizens. That at once invests him with a power equal to the voting strength of his constituency and the politician, often without the slightest thought of moral turpitude, proceeds to commercialize his power. The key to the door of official patronage is carefully guarded and the lucrative positions are distributed where they will be most conducive to the main-

tenance and strengthening of the power. Men come to be thought of politically, not in terms of their executive competency, but in terms of the number of votes they can influence. Politics becomes a game for certain professional players, instead of a means whereby public service is rendered, and the stake to be played for is political power. But it is all a false power and, eventually, there will set in a reaction against it, based on the desire to make personal worth and ability the only criteria. Such a reversal of feeling has been causing many searchings of heart among the American people during the past few years. There has been felt a sad lack of the spirit of true statesmanship, of which much may be read but little seen, whereby men, who sought and saw the highest good of the nation, turned their energies toward its achievement and rose above the practice of petty bargaining. It is men of that stamp for whom the call goes forth today, for no others are properly qualified to cope with the large issues which engage public attention at the present time.

The substitution of bluster for power is a subtle temptation because it is so easy to perpetrate. It reminds one of the amateur electrician who, having been successful in connecting up a battery which rang his door bell, argued that, if a battery would ring bells, it would also produce light. Upon attempting to light his study from the same battery, he was surprised to get no result. He sought a professional electrician in his perplexity and asked what was wrong with his last attempt. "Don't you know," replied the electrician, "that it takes more power to give light than it does to

36 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

make a noise?" Noise is a splendid means for covering over deficiencies, but its ability is strictly limited. Spectacular demonstrating as a continuous thing is not a very healthy sign of real power, for it obliterates all possibility of meekness. That kind of power requires careful and vigilant nursing and the man who nurses his power will one day become quite powerless. It is one of those things, like dignity, which must be left to take care of itself. He whose dignity is so excessively strained that it has to be guarded at every point is at best only artificially dignified. The moment one is forced to deliberate efforts to uphold one's dignity, at that moment it degenerates into embarrassed self-consciousness. So it is with power. He who goes to great pains to impress people with his power will succeed in convincing the wise ones only of his stupid conceit. In nine cases out of ten it is the man who never stops to think about his power who will exercise the greatest amount of it. That is meekness.

Every kingdom has its power behind the throne and so has every community its citizens who are quietly advancing its best interests, but usually with scant recognition and small support. Those quiet, persistent men and women who have little to say but who have a very great deal to do are the ones whose influence is ever becoming deeper and wider than even themselves may know. Somehow they are the ones who do not have to be spectacular to make their influence felt and because it is quiet it is likely to be all the more potent.

Here, for example, is a great business organization which is in the full swing of a prosperous

career. It is organized just enough and not too much; it is pervaded with a vigorous spirit of enterprise; it is alive, keenly and aggressively alive, and meets every opportunity at the half-way point. Then, all at once, for no apparent reason, it begins to run out. The aggressive spirit flags and a spirit of uncertainty and restlessness enters in. Observers call it one of those inexplicable turns of luck. The same people seem to comprise the working force of the organization, the same leaders stand at the head of it and everything is, to all appearances, just as it used to be in the prosperous days. But the something which held it all together and made it work smoothly is gone. Then, upon investigation, it is discovered that during all these years, there has been a kind of silent partner in this organization who was supplying the energy. He was the real moving spirit whose name and work were inconspicuous, but in whose power the life of the organization rested. Now this partner is gone and, while nothing is changed apparently, in reality everything is changed.

It is that kind of partnership which men find in Jesus Christ when once they have laid hold on the central truth of Christianity, which is personal union with Christ. It applies to the individual life and to the life of the Church as well. Christ is the Silent Partner from whom issues the living power of God to those who have entered the partnership. Christ never withdraws. From His side the partnership is always maintained. But, of course, it takes two to make a partnership and it is quite possible for the power of God to go begging in the midst of a powerless world. As long as men

38 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

keep in personal touch with Christ there will be power of the highest and truest description which will never fail them. But they cannot make capital out of the power of Jesus Christ. They cannot proceed to compute its value and on the basis of the computation estimate what results it can bring to the individual. On the one hand the power of God is far too great to allow itself to be expressed in terms of human values and, on the other hand, it is too thoroughly inlaid with the meekness of Christ to permit any such misuse. When men set aside the meekness of Christ and seek only the power of God, then they are dissolving their partnership with Christ and are converting God's power into a very questionable violence. Just as soon as the idea of untempered power gains the ascendancy in men's minds, just that soon are they possessed of a fanatical unreason. A brief glance into the annals of religion, either ancient or modern, will nearly always establish the fact that a fanatical position is bolstered up on an emphatic faith in the unmitigated power of Deity. We have already pointed that out in the case of Moham-medanism. It has also been so to some degree in certain periods of Christian history as well.

In the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic days, when the suppressed state of the Christians easily precluded any arrogance, the spirit of meekness, often with the martyrs to the point of joyful self-effacement, was a prominent note in the Gospel. But a few centuries later, with Christianity as the state religion, Christian meekness began to be overshadowed by the political machinations of ecclesiastical aspirants. Ignatius and Polycarp were succeeded

by Jerome and Cyril of Alexandria, and theological as well as political polemics were the order of the day. When men were so belligerently eager to establish their own power, it was natural that they should emphasize most strongly the power of God. That is not to say that Christian meekness had perished from among Christian disciples. There were still those in whom Christ's meekness prevailed. Otherwise we can scarcely think what might have become of Christianity. But the predominating features were not noticeably meek. There is another example of the same condition in the misdirected zeal of the crusaders. The meekness of the Master was quite submerged in the warlike desire to vindicate the Gospel at the point of the sword. The result was the failure which sooner or later was bound to visit such a cause. The real power of God was lost through an attempted misuse of it. Of course the clearest illustration of the commercialization for human purposes of the power of God is that of the Papacy from the eleventh to the sixteenth century. In those days meekness was a discredited quality and it was power, temporal and spiritual power, for which eager hands were outstretched. Naturally there was only one justification for such a craving for power, and that was to teach, above all else, the omnipotence of God and those powers delegated by Him to men. To look in another direction, the autocratic rule of John Calvin brings still another example. Here again meekness is lost in the mists of bitter controversy and a power, arbitrary to the last degree, is the consequence. Therefore no great surprise need be occasioned at finding undi-

40 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

luted Calvinism talking much of the unyielding justice of God and of His limitless power to execute it.

Unfortunately these are but a few of the instances which might be cited out of Christian history. Mention might be made also of the fanatical hatred which actuated the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition; of the forcible conversions of the natives of both American continents; of the uncompromising rigors of the English Commonwealth; in fact, of the sadly numerous times of cruel persecutions in a dozen different parts of Christendom. Religious violence and undue stress upon the power of God go naturally together. Nor is it a matter only of past history. In these strictly modern times there are still sects of Christians among whom an unapproachable fanaticism reigns supreme. There, in most if not all cases, one finds a wild-eyed terror of the merciless power of God which will condemn countless human beings to an eternal hell-fire of most literal description. Vigor and enthusiasm are there and sometimes the casual observer may deceive himself into imagining that there is strength as well. But real strength is impossible where meekness is dismissed.

Christ calls upon His disciples for a true degree of meekness if they would receive of His power. The two cannot be separated. His power divested of His meekness is not His; it can be but a poor imitation. When He does call upon His people for meekness it will mean a willingness, if need be, to go unrecognized; a willingness, if need be, to make sacrifices of some moment; a constant and continual desire above all else for the universal acknowl-

edgment of Himself as the Lord and Master of men.

With a thrill of daring men take up their arms and march out to risk all in merciless warfare. Gladly they receive orders and lose themselves in the cause for which they fight. An obscure death has no fears for them, self-sacrifice is expected and loyalty to the flag is an unquestioned duty. But examples of real heroism are not confined simply to the life-destroying battle-field. They are present also, in even greater measure, on that life-giving battle-field where Jesus Christ is the Captain. For enlistment under His banner has some meaning also. The world needs that type of heroism. It needs the power of God as a living force among men, and the world will get it in proportion as men learn how to receive it themselves. Men receive the power of God by living the meekness of Jesus Christ. It is to be found in Him who is the source of it all. There is small time to be wasted experimenting with a second-hand supply or with any sort of diluted substitute. There is nothing "just as good" as the power of God which is found in partnership with Christ. Man needs God and there is only one way to get Him, and that is to go and find Him.

III

HIS SEVERITY AND HIS SYMPATHY

III

HIS SEVERITY AND HIS SYMPATHY

IN one of St. Paul's letters he speaks of the "many colored" or "much variegated" wisdom of God.¹ It is an unusually expressive phrase in more ways than one. It is a reminder that God's wisdom is extremely interesting; that it is not all a wearisome drab monotony; that it has an application to others than the ultra-pious folk who are so proverbially prosaic; that it has certainly as many different aspects as there can ever be men and women to gaze into it. God's wisdom is never exhausted. It is kaleidoscopic in its limitless ability to meet all the possible exigencies of human experience. Whatever may be the needs of men, however extraordinary and unheard of may be the necessities pressing upon them, God's wisdom is never at a loss, it is never unequal to the occasion. The complete expression of this wisdom, St. Paul goes on to say, is to be found in "Christ Jesus our Lord."

Christ and His Gospel, then, will present a marvelous variety of aspects. One of them will fit in its own peculiar way into one situation and another into a different situation, but none of them is ever lost. The significance of this unity of diverse things is not to be set aside. It may be an easy matter to give attention so earnestly to one

¹ Eph. 3: 10.

46 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

aspect that all the rest is forgotten, but that is an unfortunate position, for it produces an ill-proportioned Christianity. All of them are needed. The Gospel is impoverished if any one aspect is overstressed to the exclusion of the others. Christ spoke for all ages and for all kinds of men and there is, therefore, a necessity to recognize a tremendous breadth in His message. It is, for example, most certainly a social message, but it is also individual; it is radical, but it is also conservative in the best sense of the word; it is progressive, but it keeps a firm hold upon what is best in the past. Such characteristics are not at all exclusive, one of another, they rather uphold each other. Of course, at different times interest centers naturally on correspondingly different points, but no person has a right at any time to ignore all other points. The earnest-minded Puritan fathers made something of a mistake when they were so much taken with the inexorable justice of God that they quite neglected His mercy and, thereby, constructed a religion of impervious rigidity. In recent years, however, the tendency has been otherwise. Present day censorship of the Gospel obscures most of what is harsh and uncomfortably penetrating and gives a conveniently pleasant heed to the love and mercy of God. And the latter is as much a mistake as the former. In the one case God becomes a hard Master, and in the other He is in danger of becoming merely good-natured. The note of severity cannot justifiably be eliminated from the Christian Gospel, nor can the characteristic of severity properly be overlooked in Jesus Christ Himself, for in the end Christ and His Gospel are

one. It is a real mistake to minimize and seek to explain away the harshness of many of His words, for they were clearly meant to penetrate and it is an error to make blunt their sharpness. More than once His teaching was pointed and driven home by the caustic, stinging character of His remarks and they should not be robbed of their virtue. He meant such remarks to rub and grate just as they must have done. He intended that they should carry a barb with them which would pierce the hearts and consciences of those to whom they were addressed. His severity was intentional and deliberate, and His message would be inestimably weakened without it.

One day Christ turned to certain Jews who gave an appearance, at least, of accepting His words and told them that, if they would persevere in their faith, they would become His disciples in all truth and would be made free.² It may be that He was testing the sincerity of their faith, or possibly, He was seeking to encourage them in it. Whatever His object may have been, their true temper was quickly displayed. What small glimmerings of faith they had were promptly drowned in the surging up of that insufferable pride which had already sapped the life out of their old religion. They indignantly protested that they had no need to be made free, for they were not slaves but sons of Abraham. If spiritual freedom were in question, they were quite sufficient unto themselves in that respect as well, for they were children of God and needed no instruction as to their spiritual heritage. Self-righteously they plumed themselves upon their

² St. John 8: 31 ff.

48 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

direct descent from Abraham and declared that they were God's chosen people and, in their stupid pride, they imagined that God must take care of them, no matter what sort of degenerate spiritual life they might be preparing for Him. Our Lord told them that they were fit children of their father but not of Abraham. If they had been Abraham's children they would not have sought to kill Him for telling the truth—Abraham never did such things. But these Jews were very dull. They could see little beyond their own small system and they gave the obvious answer that the only other father they had was God. What scorn there must have flashed from His eyes as He turned upon them and said: "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but He sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father it is your will to do." No gentle speech could break through the calloused consciences of these men. It would take something very strong and biting. Here was a situation not to be dallied with. It called for a bit of heroic treatment. Had our Lord acquiesced in their supreme self-assurance, they would have departed strengthened in their cocksure belief in their undisputed monopoly upon divine privileges, when His chief object was to rouse them out of their spiritual enthrallment. This whole passage is an inspiring piece of denunciation and it is by no means surprising to read at the end that they reached for stones to cast at Him.

The only way to make some people decent is to begin by making them very angry. Notice that this applies to *some* people. It is no general rule which will be invariably available either for all kinds of people or for all occasions. The result for some would be a broken-hearted state of collapse, while in other cases a fierce and lasting resentment would be aroused. A certain nicety of judgment is required. Indiscriminate severity is bound to be a mistake, yet there are times when it is the only effective recourse. The penitent sinner is never a fit subject for such treatment, for his soul is already deeply harrowed and what he needs is healing. Neither should the learner, who is conscientiously doing his best, be harshly reproached for his mistakes, for that will produce discouragement when his greatest need is encouragement. Nor again should the man who is honestly open to conviction be severely berated, for that is most likely to antagonize him and fix his half-formed prejudices. But when one finds men and women who, by years of indulgence and through long cherished habits of selfishness and sin, have surrounded their consciences with layers of leathery indifference then the only way to reach their consciences at all is to tear a way through and lay bare the living thing itself. A kindly, soft-hearted soothing will only make them so much the better satisfied with themselves. Once their ire is roused, they will first be angry with their critic, but when they have had time for reflection, it is not at all improbable that they will turn their anger upon themselves and see themselves in quite a new light. Of course it will not be an in-

50 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

evitable remedy, but it has its own peculiar possibilities.

It may be that Christ had something of that sort in mind when He released His severity upon His hearers. He may have had some such purpose when He hurled His "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" over and over again like so many strokes of a hammer.³ Possibly He had a similar object in pointing His disciples to the same group upon another occasion and saying, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven."⁴ Look at them, He tells His followers, and see what it is you are not to emulate. He was severe to an intense degree of severity. How could He help but be severe with those who were making a mockery of God? By no means must these portions of the Gospel be slurred over. They are wanted, and they are wanted with all the tense fervor of righteous wrath which Christ must have cast into them.

There is nothing disproportionate, however, in the character of the Master. Because He was severe does not intimate in the least that He was out of sympathy with the people. Severity for the average person rather too frequently gets the upper hand and tempers are lost. Then there are things to be sorry for later on. But with Him it was different. He had no hasty and ill-timed words for which to repent, because His severity was always controlled by His sympathy. So readily sympathetic was He with all who came to Him, that He quickly grasped what was the particular

³ St. Mt. 23.

⁴ St. Mt. 5:20.

need of each one. Therefore He was sharply severe with some of them because that was what they needed. His sympathetic understanding could go further than the people's own knowledge of themselves. But, on the other hand, none ever came to Him in honest quest of help or consolation without finding a fathomless wealth of sympathy awaiting one's special needs. If Christ was relentlessly severe with the Pharisees as a class in their vaunted supercilious pride, He assumed a totally different attitude toward Nicodemus, one of the same Pharisees, when he came to Him with a sincere desire to know the truth.⁵ Under such conditions Nicodemus was received with no critically suspicious spirit, but with a sympathetic desire to enlighten him in the way of everlasting life. The man was perplexed and was groping uneasily in an intellectual and spiritual twilight for that which would answer the questionings lately awakened within him. He had been deeply stirred by the words of the Prophet of Nazareth and, led by an inherent craving for the truth, he sought Him out in the quiet of the night for personal consultation. No one of the Apostles could have received kindlier consideration from the Master than did this inquirer. The sympathy of Christ unerringly reached the true cause of the visit at the very outset and, with a solicitous regard for his spiritual welfare, He entered gladly upon an intimate discussion of the deep things of God. Christ had no unreasonable prejudice against the Pharisees and, in this case, the Pharisee is quite lost sight of in the man.

⁵ St. John 3: 1-15.

52 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

Many other examples of His sympathy might be cited, remembering always that sympathy does not consist simply in tearful condolences, but in a sensible understanding of, and a hearty response to, the special needs of the situation. When Zacchaeus faced the hostile attacks of the people of Jericho, he turned to Christ, not so much for justification as for a fair opportunity to state his case and get a just hearing.⁶ Christ understood his position at once and, disregarding the popular hatred for all publicans, He came speedily to the rescue. The same sympathy was required, but for an entirely different need, when our Lord met the widow of Nain on the way to the burial of her only son. His heart went out immediately to the one in all that crowd who most needed His comfort and, before a word was spoken to anyone else, "He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not."⁷ Or again, no less real was the quick, sympathetic understanding with which He answered the scribe who placed the love of God and of one's neighbor above burnt offerings and sacrifices—"Thou art not far," He assured him, "from the Kingdom of God."⁸ His sympathy was never wanting. Even in His most severe moments His severity was not actuated by a spirit of sarcastic bitterness, but rather by a sympathetic comprehension of what the occasion required.

There are not many things which rankle and hurt as much as heartless criticism. The mere knowledge that people are critically attentive to all they are attempting to do is enough in itself to

⁶ St. Luke 19: 1-10.

⁸ St. Mk. 12: 34.

⁷ St. Luke 7: 13.

irritate many people into practical inefficiency. Yet the idea that chronic severity adds to one's standing before the world is not at all uncommon. Many a man in a professional or official position will cultivate a brusque, overbearing manner to make a stronger impression upon the less favored ones. A total disregard for the rights of others is considered a mark of genius. Such a man soon acquires a reputation for his blunt roughness and his friends smile good-humoredly at his queer ways, while his victims suffer with a silent longing for that touch of sympathy which is so noticeably absent. Even the highly cultured frequently mistake bad manners for the eccentricities of genius. A forbidding mien is often made to cover a quantity of incompetence. If sympathy were present such wanton heartlessness would be out of the question, but the warmth of sympathy has been chilled by the coldly calculating determination to maintain one's own authority, even if it means the mangling of a neighbor's feelings. Unsympathetic severity becomes a blight, and sternness is cheapened into disgruntled irascibility.

The same thing arises again in a somewhat subtler form in that ubiquitous group of intellectually analytical persons. The hypercritical attitude is an acquired habit and one of the necessary steps in the acquisition is the elimination of sympathy. Everything must be regarded dispassionately and upon the pre-supposition that flaws are there to be discovered. If anything laudatory has to be said it is qualified with so many "buts" that the final impression will quite certainly be adverse. In some circles it is a sign of intellectual weakness to

54 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

commend anything and it is extremely bad taste to speak constructively of anybody. Clever discernment consists in a certain ability in dissection and a satirical commentary on events is the only kind which is duly appreciated. These people can always tell glibly how things ought not to be done and, less frequently, how they ought to be done, but, in either case, it seldom gets beyond the telling. For them such a thing as a sympathetic understanding of a situation is an anomaly. What sense of comfort can be derived from living in such a chaotic atmosphere of analyzed objections is hard to understand, and as far as the uninitiated are concerned it is distinctly unpleasant.

To those honestly interested in the search for sound progress in the improvement of the conditions of human life, this attitude of unfeeling criticism is really distressing. It deters many from embarking on enterprises in which they sincerely believe, and it is a perennial annoyance to many good men and women who are giving freely of their lives and labor to advance a worthy cause. Criticism may sometimes be needed and severity itself may not be out of place, but there is no good reason why sympathy should be relegated to obscurity and a gritty spirit of antagonism rule men's minds. Some men hold their own views and act accordingly, but there seems to be a considerable number whose views hold them in such a vigorous clutch that their field of vision is disappointingly restricted.

On the other hand, maudlin sympathy is also to be sharply deprecated. The hysterical tendency to allow one's feelings to run away with one's judg-

ment is easily as productive of injustice as the most unrestrained severity. The relative value of facts is lost and people are precipitated into hasty action by weak sentimentality. It is a highly commendable instinct to take the part of the "under dog," but that instinct must sometimes be curbed, for underneath may be the only place where this particular "dog" has any right to be. It is true that justice has often gone astray by inflicting harsh penalties upon trifling provocation, but it is also true that unmerited leniency, actuated by false sympathy, has sinned just as grievously in the opposite direction. One of the best tricks of the attorney for the defense is to play upon the feelings of his jury and arouse a sentimental sympathy for the prisoner. The veriest rascal sheds his crocodile tears and catches some of the unwary whose flood-gates are always sympathetically ajar. He who is ready to excuse everything, is as dangerous to himself and to society as he who condemns indiscriminately and has scarcely a word of approval for any project or for any person.

Sympathy uncontrolled by common sense is, without doubt, a dangerous weapon, but that sympathy which is real enough to give place to severity when the need arises is an indispensable possession. The two qualities must interplay and meet every situation upon its own merits, for there can be no general rule of application for either one of them. Under similar conditions one person may require sympathetic treatment, while another may be reached only by severity. Strictly speaking the treatment in either case will be sympathetic, but it will be differently applied. All people cannot be

56 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

treated alike, because no two are the same. There is no small danger of losing that distinction in these modern times when there is so much indulgence in general terms. People talk a great deal about society and humanity and mankind, but they are likely to talk rather too little about men and women. They talk about the child problem and children, but not as much, perhaps, as they might about boys and girls. They attempt to work out systems by which all manner of things may be done, and oftener than is well for them they lose the individual in the multitude. When it comes to dealing with men and women, general rules must be quite elastic. It is very useful to have, in the form of guiding principles, the results of the wide experience of those who have been for some time in active service, but those principles cannot be used as so many rails upon which people may be shunted about. If, for example, a teacher draws on his years of varied experience to formulate certain general rules of teaching, no instructor can deftly apply the rules to his pupils and thereby expect that they will be "taught." It was a young man of average intelligence who had been told that, in teaching a Bible lesson, it would give an added touch of authority to his words if he held an open Bible in his hands, even if it were not referred to. He could not be persuaded that it would likely have quite the contrary effect when he was trying to put the Bible stories into simple language for a lot of little ragamuffins gathered in promiscuously off the streets. It is by no means an uncommon blunder among teachers. A smattering of pedagogy, a bit of psychology, an ac-

quaintance with the required text-books, and the teacher is equipped to turn children through the accustomed machinery and bring them out educated. A reaction has already set in in the direction of shaping instruction about the temperamental peculiarities of the individual child. That also may be overdone in its turn to the point of losing the valuable effects of discipline in study. But the point is, the teacher needs more than knowledge—he needs also a touch of personal sympathy with his pupils.

This is by no means to say that general rules are useless and unprofitable. It is quite necessary that there should be some large lines to mark out the course of one's efforts. A mass of unrelated bits of practical experience is bewildering and of small serviceable value. It must be sifted over and organized before any usable deductions may be drawn. At the same time general rules of human life, even though based upon a practical knowledge of human life, cannot be used as so many molds into which men and women must be made to fit. Human life is notoriously changeable and the only way to know it is to keep in personal touch with it; the only way to understand men and women is to get out and live among them. Hosts of things may be learned out of books, but human nature cannot be learned out of any book except the book of life. The idea that one may have a beautiful, large-hearted sympathy for people in misery and trouble, when one has never come into immediate touch with such people themselves, is rubbish. As long as Prince Siddartha was carefully guarded within the precincts of the royal in-

58 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

closure, from which everything unlovely and unpleasant was excluded, he had not the slightest idea of the meaning of love and sympathy.

“The King commanded that within those walls
No mention should be made of death or age,
Sorrow, or pain, or sickness.”⁹

It was not until, by accident, the hideous, diseased beggar crept across his path that a surprised sense of compassion made itself felt.

“Then cried he, while his lifted countenance
Glowed with the burning passion of a love
Unspeakable, the ardour of a hope
Boundless, insatiate: ‘Oh! suffering world;
Oh! known and unknown of my common flesh,
Caught in this common net of death and woe,
And life which binds to both! I see, I feel
The vastness of the agony of earth—’”¹⁰

The capacity for sympathy is inherent in all men, but blindness (either intentional or mistaken) or selfishness may stultify it to the point of extinction.

Christian love may be thinned out and diffused over the length and breadth of the world in a vaguely esthetic love for mankind, but it will have none of the characteristics of the love that Jesus Christ taught and lived in His life. It is the personal contact and nothing short of it, which can give reality to any love or sympathy. That is certainly worth some earnest consideration as involving a kind of logical necessity for the Incarnation of our Lord.

⁹ Sir Edwin Arnold—“Light of Asia,” Book Second.

¹⁰ Ibid., Book Third.

His Severity and His Sympathy 59

The practical truth of all this is manifest when it is fitted into the common experience of all men. It is not until a personal interest is established between two people that the real good there is in each one becomes revealed to the other, and it is to the one who has such a personal interest that another will naturally turn when in need of sympathetic understanding. In these days, when mechanical methods of work and even of life are becoming more and more prevalent, it is a cause for heartfelt thankfulness that there is still the sweet leaven of Christian sympathy to keep men from becoming breathing automatons. A firm grasp needs to be maintained upon this essential spirit of the Gospel, which holds forth a living reminder that men and women are men and women, and not so many animated pieces of flesh and blood with which daily contact is an unavoidable necessity because they happen to be constituent parts of an environment.

It was in a personal way that the Master did His work, and His is a thoroughly personal message. He could denounce the Pharisees bitterly when occasion required, but when one of them came to Him, not as a Pharisee but as an interested inquirer in all good faith, then Christ left denouncing and received the man as he came. His invitation is always thoroughly pervaded with His personal sympathy. But along with the comfort of that assurance, there is another which should not be overlooked, namely that the severity of Christ is not at all a thing of the past. Those who, in a Pharisaic strain, make a mockery of God to-day, whether openly before the world or in secret

60 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

behind the screen of apparently upright lives, will have to reckon with the same severe rebuking which Christ had for the mocking crowd of Pharisees. The severity will be no less poignant because it comes from the Master of infinite love, but it will rather be so much the more piercing. The rebuke that comes from the braggart can easily be laughed aside, but when the gentle, and kindly, and sympathetic find cause for reproach, that is the time when it burns its way home. Practical Christianity is not a cold acceptance of a certain belief, it is alive with the sympathetic spirit of the Master. There is a personal privilege and there is also a personal responsibility. Christianity is not a vaguely rarefied spiritual atmosphere, for the Gospel is pointed and the points all fit.

IV

HIS COURAGE AND HIS GENTLENESS

IV

HIS COURAGE AND HIS GENTLENESS

HOMAGE to the brave has always been paid as, far back as human nature can be traced. From the times when our savage ancestors waged their mercilessly cruel tribal warfare down to the present day the brave have always commanded universal respect. There is an inherent responsiveness in every man's soul to the appeal of bravery and courage. Even when forced to despise people for a dozen other reasons, still one is often compelled to admire their grit almost in spite of oneself. Public opinion, fickle as it is, has more than once swerved from vociferous opposition to cheerful commendation because the one formerly discredited has shown such a dauntless spirit of determined perseverance. Almost the worst fault of cowardly people is that they are distinctly uninteresting. That is undoubtedly the reason why the hero of an adventure is invariably a brave man. It would be next to impossible to compose a story which would strike the popular fancy wherein the leading characters are cowards. When most people read fiction they want characters to admire, and they generally refuse to bestir themselves to an unnatural admiration for cowardly characters. The folk-lore and legends of all races bear their perpetual witness to the honor which men of all times have felt impelled to pay to their

64 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

courageous forefathers. From time immemorial bards and minstrels have immortalized their own names by extolling the bravery and courage of the ancient heroes. From generation to generation have been handed down the mighty deeds of an Achilles, of an Æneas, of a Roland, or of a King Arthur. And the modern appreciation of such heroic qualities is in no sense dimmed, even if not quite so credulous.

There are many ways in which such honor for bravery may be given expression, but as a rule there is present some feeling of delicacy which restrains even the most appreciative from placing anything like a monetary value upon brave deeds. It seems eminently right and reasonable that men of that stamp should have higher than financial aspirations, and there should be no desire to cheapen their achievements. Therefore the means of conferring distinction which may be employed have usually very slight intrinsic value, but nevertheless they are altogether beyond price simply from the honor of receiving them. Now and then, of course, will be found instances where gifts of money or of property have been conferred for deeds of courage, but the rule is rather the other way. In the ancient times it might be merely a wreath or garland or a title of honor which was bestowed, but the recipient considered himself fully rewarded. Today it is more often a badge or medal which is presented to the courageous one together with a statement of the gratitude and appreciation of his fellows, and nothing more than that is desired. The Medal of Honor given by the President of the United States to the men of the

army and navy for signal acts of bravery is in itself of passing value, but to the soldier or sailor it is quite beyond price. So also the Iron Cross awarded to the German soldier for extraordinary valor is itself of insignificant worth, but it is a prize beyond purchase among the soldiers. The plain Victoria Cross for the British soldier is in its turn intrinsically inconsiderable, yet it is a mark of the highest honor. These men are brave men, and they are receiving tokens of recognition of their courage.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was also brave, and He also received a Cross. His Cross was not a reward in recognition of courage, but by it, indeed upon it, He proved the very depths of courage which lay within His human nature. Jesus Christ was a Brave Man. Probably He is seldom considered in just that way because He never swept out over a gory battle-field and covered Himself with a blaze of military glory. But the reality of His courage is true nevertheless. The mission of Christ was a hazardous undertaking; not in the sense that it was at all doubtful, but that its course lay through many personal perils and hardships for its Master. More than once violent hands were outstretched against Him, and the plots and intrigues of His enemies were numerous and malignant. It took no small degree of courage to endure the obloquy and slander which were heaped upon Him, and to face with composure the half-veiled threats of His adversaries. Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians forgot their bickerings and quarrels and made common cause against this incomprehensible Intruder. But the courage of

66 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

Christ never once deserted Him from the time of His first rejection at Nazareth to His last rejection on Calvary.

Christ in His temptation in the wilderness and Christ on His Cross are probably the examples of His courage which come most readily to mind. The one is a wonderful instance of moral courage, and the other perhaps more of physical. But in between these two there were many times when His courage was put severely to the test. After the first great temptation had been successfully resisted St. Luke says that the tempter "departed from Him for a season."¹ His temptations were not over, but the initial onslaught had been successfully resisted. Once certainly when there must have been a renewal of the temptation was when our Lord met, not the opposition, but the enthusiasm of the people after the feeding of the five thousand. Crowds had flocked out into the country following Him and consumed with a desire to hear more of His teaching. When He found that they were without food and were in danger of suffering ill effects from the want of it, He supplied their needs in the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Then it was that the people, raised to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, rose up with a great clamor and were in a mind to place a crown upon His head and make Him king. "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again into the mountain Himself alone."² He left them at once and never allowed another such opportunity. Christ was human, and it takes no little courage on

¹ St. Luke 4: 13.

² St. John 6: 15.

the part of any man to hold himself back from popular recognition because it will be better for the cause for which he is laboring. Men always like to be recognized, they like to be appreciated. And when the people in their excitement wanted to raise Him to the position which the great David had held in the golden days gone by, it must have been a real temptation to use the opportunity for getting Himself firmly fixed in their admiration. Many a man has been unable to resist such an enticing opportunity, and often one can scarcely find it in one's heart to condemn them very harshly for it. It was because Julius Cæsar, brave man and great general that he was, could not put aside the temptation of a crown that his career was brought to an untimely end. But the Kingdom of Christ was to be of a different stripe, and He courageously refused to lower His high standard for all the cries of the multitudes.

A daring kind of courage, such as is not found again in the Gospels, is to be seen in Christ's driving of the money-changers out of the Temple.³ In fact His very presence in Jerusalem for the final Passover was a daring step in itself, for He knew that the jealous hatred of His enemies was well on the way to become crystallized into open violence. He certainly must have known that Annas, the ex-highpriest, was the ruling power in Jerusalem, before whom all the members of the Sanhedrin were obliged to give way. And in all likelihood He also knew that Annas reaped a handsome revenue from the sale of animals for sacrifice within the Temple inclosure. Therefore He was imperil-

³ St. Luke 19: 45 ff.

68 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

ing Himself in a most dangerous fashion when He deliberately and publicly ejected these merchants and upset the tables over which their business was conducted. Here was a matter which must be attended to, and with the boldness of a complete confidence in the righteousness of His action He assumed the risks and fulfilled His duty.

Again His courage appears in still a different light when He stood on trial for His life and was called upon to answer the charges which were laid against Him. Had there really been any hope of these accusations coming to naught, or had there been any reason to think that the authorities would dismiss the whole matter for the preposterous thing that it was, then it might have been a question of good policy for our Lord to remain silent and offer no defense. But Christ knew well that there was no such prospect. He understood the fierce pertinacity of His accusers and the politic irresponsibility of Pilate, and He could easily forecast the logical outcome unless some valiant appeal could stay the proceedings. Yet He made no effort to defend Himself.⁴ That was real courage. How most men would boil up in fiery indignation and pour forth torrents of reproach at the injustice of such a mockery of a trial! The Master "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb" made no plea, but accepted the inevitable verdict. The courage of Christ was of that high order which could refuse to act as well as respond with immediate activity if the need arose.

Gentleness easily stands in contrast to bravery and courage, and yet it is more perhaps in the way

⁴ St. Mk. 15:5.

of gentleness that Christians commonly think of Christ than in almost any other way. There need never be any special appeal made for the gentleness of Christ, for even the most rudimentary knowledge of His life carries that message to the learner. Whether it was a broken body or a tortured soul, the touch it received from Christ was invariably soothing in its gentleness. Physical disabilities were obliterated when the gentle hand of the Master descended upon the unfortunates, and conscience-stricken hearts were stimulated to fresh resolves by the equally gentle word of divine forgiveness. On one occasion a woman haltingly crept up to Him as He was walking surrounded by a crowd of people and touched the hem of His garment that she might be healed of her infirmity. Christ, turning about, asked who it was who had touched Him, and the woman in fear and trembling finally came forward to receive the expected rebuke, only to be greeted with the words, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole."⁵ That was thoroughly characteristic of Him. Gently He opened His arms to the little children and spoke a blessing upon their young lives.⁶ The sinful woman who bathed His feet with her tears was not subjected to the harsh condemnation which Simon the Pharisee expected, but was gently assured that because her love was great, her sins were forgiven.⁷ Even at the times when His courage was most plainly evident the gentleness was also clearly apparent, as when, out of the midst of His sufferings on the Cross, He could still be concerned for the future welfare of

⁵ St. Mk. 5:34.

⁷ St. Luke 7:47.

⁶ St. Mt. 19:13-15.

70 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

His mother, and commended her to the care of the disciple whom He loved.⁸ His gentleness and His courage never stood as opposites but rather as complementary qualities. They dove-tailed naturally into one another, and the one was not complete apart from the other.

This is the truest kind of courage. The bully who rides roughshod over all that stands in his way is not brave, he is only brutal. Yet, like many similar fallacies, there is a good deal of brutality which passes for courage. Through some misapprehension a man gains an undeserved reputation for bravery, and he promptly proceeds to swagger through life on the strength of his reputation. Because he expects people to knuckle under to him, most of them do. He exacts petty tribute of fear and subservience from his neighbors, and in time he becomes an institution in his community, and the long-suffering neighborhood endures him as a necessary and ineradicable evil. Then one day some presumptuous upstart, goaded beyond the point of endurance, declares war upon the bully and his inflated courage collapses, giving an astounding illustration of painful cowardice. The bully is never gentle, and therefore at best presents a mere burlesque on a brave man. Give such a man the slightest advantage over his fellows and he will make them keenly conscious of his superiority. That is why it is often a dangerous matter to invest some people with even a trifling authority. Some men cannot stand authority just as many cannot stand prosperity. Dress one of these in an official regalia and at once he becomes pompously

⁸ St. John 19:26-27.

overbearing. With a great showing of mock importance he makes a nuisance of himself, and all because he has a glittering desire to put on a brave front, but has no conception of gentleness.

Physical strength is always an impressive sight, and the average person will be greatly interested in the feats of physical power which are frequently exhibited before the public. But these performers are not necessarily strong men. They may be men of tremendous muscular development which enables them to lift weights and carry burdens of prodigious proportions, but the strong man is the one who can restrain his strength as well as use it. He will not only be able to move ponderous objects, but he will also be able to handle the most fragile things with such a delicate touch as to render them perfectly safe in his hands. Similarly the willingness to thrust one's head into the midst of a multitude of dangers is not necessarily a mark of courage. It may be plain foolishness. Courage must be the handmaiden of gentleness—or perhaps vice versa—to preserve the former from brutality and the latter from timidity.

There is undoubtedly a great deal more of real courage in the world today than any one person has any way of knowing. And there is at the same time much more of Christian gentleness associated with that courage than might ordinarily be admitted. It is an easy matter to protest against the calloused hardness of men and women. Anyone may hear daily complaints at the selfish inconsiderateness of people, at their impenetrable indifference, and at their crafty trickery to exploit their friends. No one who knows anything of life will

72 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

be ignorant of the sad prevalence of such tendencies. But of course it is that sort of thing which is most widely heralded before the public. The public hears of a dozen cases of outrageous dishonesty where it hears of one instance of fair dealing. But no one has a right to forget the numerous cases of honesty of which nothing is heard. If a man deliberately escapes from paying his bills, the neighbors gasp at the scandal of it. But there is nothing at all unusual about the hundreds of others who do pay their debts. It is because people expect one another to be honest that they are not surprised at their honesty, and it is for the same reason that they become disturbed over cases of dishonesty. If dishonesty were the rule and honesty the exception, men would simply have to close up shop and have no more dealings with one another. In much the same way people are expected to be courageous. Many a stout heart today is being put to the test, but others do not know it, for the struggle is being waged behind the doors of a private life. Many a smiling face conceals a raging warfare within, and victories are won and triumphs achieved under the unseeing eyes of the passing crowd. But those who see their friends accept serious reverses with a smile, who see them take their losses and failures simply as spurs to fresh endeavor, who see them meet discouraging hardships without flinching—they know that courageous men and women are still to be found. Now and then some valiant deed brings a man before the public and he is made an example of illustrious bravery. But the unknown heroes are beyond count, and there is a large element of gentleness in that kind of courage.

One of the happiest present-day omens of the advancement of a gentler, and therefore a truer, courage is the progress of the movement for international peace. There are scores of things in our midst which cry out loudly for rigorous attention, but prominent in the front rank of modern needs is the need of the abolition of war and its inhuman accompaniments. Traditionally courage is associated with the bloodthirsty warrior, and it is from such an association that it must be rescued and be brought into a gentler atmosphere where its true beauty will be made manifest. No one need be deceived by any specious argument that by such a movement men will be robbed of all the military virtues which make for vigor and strength and virility. All those sterling qualities which develop out of struggle and contest and the pitting of strength against strength must by all means be preserved. Without them men would indeed be weaklings morally and spiritually as well as physically. The abolition of war will not be destructive to such characteristics, but it will center attention upon a somewhat different field of soldierly adventure. Men must still fight, but they are being offered new weapons. Education, legislation and personal service are the kinds of weapons with which they are asked to arm themselves today, and the possibilities for a valiant use of them are in no wise less than in the use of powder and shot. No doubt our savage ancestors objected in much the same way when innovations in weapons were introduced in their days. Imagine the disgust which must have been felt by the good old knights of the Middle Ages when fire-

74 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

arms began to supplant the lance and the great two-handed sword. How could knightly valor ever be preserved when men did not so much as come within reach of each other, but from long distances hurled silly messengers of iron and lead! Or earlier still, imagine how our primitive forefathers must have growled out their guttural maledictions at the innovation of the pointed and edged weapon as an instrument for battle. What was to become of the manly self-respect which accompanied the brawny arm and the stone battle-axe when men were no more to embrace in a savage death struggle but were being instructed to do their fighting at arm's length, depending more upon mere skill and dexterity than upon the immediate application of solid bone and muscle! No, everyone understands very well that the truly valiant spirit has not been lost with the disuse of the stone ax or the lance; it has only become more refined. The advance of civilization has brought a purging of our ideals from coarser modes of expression to finer and cleaner, but the ideals themselves have been in no way impaired. If it is to be believed that courage and valor must be determined only by the instruments through which they are given expression, then the modern world should by all means return at once to the discarded proclivities of barbarism, give atavism free play, and cultivate anew the forgotten efficiency of teeth and talons for use in personal encounter.

There is a "higher soldiership" where courage is not wanting and where gentleness comes into its own. If again and again out of war-racked Europe there sounds a piteous cry for relief from a

people ground under the merciless heel of an invading enemy, doubtless it is an echo of the same cry which sounds from a dozen quarters where the scourge of war has not settled. There are men and women harassed by the vices of their own ignorance whose condition is a living challenge to society; there are children being exploited and shamefully misused for whom serious battles have yet to be fought; there are commercialized vice and organized lawlessness united in battle array and blocking the progress of decency and morality and righteousness; there are multitudes untouched by the knowledge of God and ignorant of the riches of the Gospel of Christ, both at home and out to the four corners of the earth, who must somehow be enlightened and stimulated spiritually. If all this does not offer an alluring field for the exercise of soldierly capacities, then this present generation has arrived at the point where the bloodiest warfare could not arouse a courage totally defunct. The courage demanded today certainly requires grit and stamina and sturdy manliness, but it also calls for a gentleness which will cleanse it, not of its strength but of its brutal roughness.

This spirit of courage pervaded by gentleness, essentially Christian as it is, is clearly deepening and broadening in these modern days. It is not such a great while ago that when a man voluntarily devoted himself to a life of self-sacrifice for the uplift of his fellow-men, his acquaintances asked one another what great sorrow had come into his life to impel him to such penitential service. Now people are beginning at least to catch a glimpse of the real joy there is in being of some use to others

76 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

and in making their own interests larger than the supplying of their own needs.

It is no new idea for Christianity, this idea of gentle courage. As has been noted above, it is beautifully exemplified in the life of Christ Himself. It has received similar, if less thorough, exemplification in the lives of throngs of Christian saints of all ages. To be sure it has not infrequently been lost sight of. There have been times not only when the Church was brutally violent in her dealings with men in persecuting those without the fold, but also times when she was supinely inactive. The religious torpor of eighteenth century latitudinarianism in the Church of England came near being quite fatal to vital Christianity, and no less fatal was the erastianism of the Church of Rome under the French domination of the fourteenth century. At such times the Church forgot her heritage of Christian fortitude, and settled into a comfortable state of spiritual apathy. Needless to say, the Church was by no means honoring her Master during those periods of her history.

It is not a matter only of poetic fancy that Christians sing

“Like a mighty army moves the Church of God,”

for Christians are soldiers as well as servants of their Master. The Gospel is often accused of catering to the passive and effeminate in man, but that is because only half of the Gospel is read. The Church Militant is constantly urging a courageous and strong-hearted Christianity upon its people. There are still battles to be fought for the Prince of Peace, and there always will be as long

as selfishness and injustice and unrighteousness are exerting their corrupting influences. Courageous Christians are in demand for all this, Christians who will stand their ground because they have faith in their Christian principles. Not many generations ago it was the atheist and the infidel who were considered the brave and fearless ones, not afraid to assert their independence and refuse to be enslaved by a conventional belief. Today atheism and infidelism are fast on the wane, and instead there is current a very popular looseness in belief. The tendency is to give a hazy and more or less unconcerned acknowledgment to a great many things, but to maintain no clear faith in any particular direction. The courageous man today is the man who in the midst of a widespread moral and religious instability will yet stand stanchly by his colors and be ready for action when necessary. That is not a reactionary or ultra-conservative position, it is eminently sensible, for no aggressive work has ever been accomplished anywhere but by men who had the courage of their convictions.

It may be that there has never been a time when a gentle courage has had such splendid opportunities for achievement as at the present day. At any rate it fulfills one of the greatest modern needs. In Christ the strongest courage and the tenderest gentleness are exquisitely blended in a perfect harmony. Jesus Christ is still the goal of men's efforts, and He is still the foremost factor in the progress of human affairs. The Gentle Jesus is also the Courageous Christ, and together they constitute the Master of Life.

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THE confidence of Christ is not, in itself, a surprising fact, for it is to be expected in any great leader, as one of the necessary qualifications for leadership. One must have confidence in oneself in order to inspire it in others. But it is the extent and the character of His confidence which give rise to a consciousness of something unique behind it. It is to be expected that a teacher will have some very certain convictions about his own doctrines; it is taken for granted that any honest reformer will be well enough assured of the consistency of his own position to ask for some sacrifices on the part of those who stand with him. On general principles, therefore, no one would wonder if Christ had told His disciples that they must allow no personal pleasures to stand in the way of their duty by Him. No one would suffer any surprise if He had firmly demanded that His followers must form no questionable companionships which might interfere with the practice of those high moral precepts which He advocated. But His confidence went far beyond that. As an example of its general character and extent, these words which He spoke to His disciples stand out in bold colors—"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that

82 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”¹ Here are the closest relationships in human life which the Master told His followers must be broken if they were to prohibit personal allegiance to Himself.

If the average person were to make such statements, his hearers would undoubtedly declare him presumptuous beyond all toleration and contemptuously turn their backs on him. And that is what His enemies of that day attempted to do, but somehow it was different with Him and they failed. On several occasions when He spoke words to this effect they cried out vehemently against Him. In a fierce wave of anger they said that He made Himself equal with God, and that was the very height of blasphemy. But their objections all turned out to be futile. They simply were unable to find any point of vantage against Him. All the careful scrutiny which they employed upon His daily life was baffled, and for all their efforts the only fault they were able to lay bare was that He insisted on giving His blessings to the people on the Sabbath.

On Christ Himself His enemies could make no impression. There seemed to be an indomitable confidence about Him which was altogether beyond their comprehension. He never strutted before them putting Himself on exhibition, nor did He talk pompously about Himself; but there was a quiet certainty in all that He said and did which would put the boaster to shame. As a rule, when people clatter a great deal about their own exploits

¹ St. Mt. 10: 37-38.

His Confidence and His Dependence 83

and put themselves out to advertise their own opinions, it is a fair indication that they are not nearly as certain of themselves as they appear to be. It is like a boy on a dark night whistling to keep up his faltering courage. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" ²—a sentiment well proved by Jesus Christ.

The particular occasion of the words quoted above was when Christ was giving certain directions to the Apostles before sending them on that preliminary missionary journey which was to be in the nature of an experimental training for them. He would not have them go in ignorance of the difficulties they would be called upon to face. They were not to go blindly, sustained by false hopes from which they would be painfully disillusioned, but they were to have open eyes, having been warned in advance of the trials and indignities which awaited them. They would be put on trial before councils; their own people would humiliate and even scourge them; they would be accused before the kings and rulers of the world; their own kindred would turn against them, and their very lives would be in constant jeopardy; they would be despised and persecuted, misunderstood and misused—but all this was not to be avoided, it must be endured. His disciples must hold Him superior to all else. He knew that His message would cause division and strife even among those bound by the closest ties by reason of its uncompromising demands, but His confidence was absolute and even that must be accepted.

One might, perhaps, think of a man possessed to

² Isa. 30: 15.

84 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

an extraordinary degree of that tenuous quality which, for want of a better name, we call "personal magnetism," making such demands upon certain of his followers and inducing them to accede to them. But personal magnetism alone cannot continue down through the centuries with a force never diminishing but rather ever on the increase. And Christ spoke not only with this unswerving confidence to a small circle of admirers. He made such declarations of central importance in the very substance of His teaching, and then claimed His teaching to be of universal and eternal worth. He, if He were lifted up, would draw all men unto Him.³ He would rear up His Church upon nothing less than a personal faith in Himself, and that Church was to be without end.⁴ Upon His own authority He set completely aside some of the traditional teaching of the Jews, and supplanted it with His own precepts.⁵ He promised His personal recognition before God of those who confessed Him among men, and a corresponding denial of those who denied Him.⁶ At the last day many would appeal to Him upon false representations and He would be obliged to disown them.⁷ The classical example of His invincible confidence lies in those gracious words of invitation, endeared to the hearts of all Christian people and matchless in the beauty of their appeal, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."⁸

From the beginning to the end there was always

³ St. John 12: 32.

⁴ St. Mt. 16: 18.

⁵ St. Mt. 5: 22, 28, 34, 39, 44.

⁶ St. Luke 12: 8.

⁷ St. Mt. 7: 22.

⁸ St. Mt. 11: 28.

something more than human in the confidence which He never failed to display. He not only had a full faith in His teaching, but He was consistently sure of Himself. Whether circumstances were favorable or adverse, whether the people were responsive or antagonistic, still He never faltered, but with the utmost assurance pursued His way confident of ultimate victory.

His confidence, however, did not release Him from all need of dependence. On the contrary, He seemed to derive His confidence out of His dependence. Far from making any claims to self-sufficiency, He insisted that His whole life hung upon the will of the Heavenly Father. He did not come to do His own will, but that of the Father.⁹ Before selecting His Apostles out of the company of followers and appointing them to their specific work, He spent the night in earnest prayer to the Father.¹⁰ He was never alone in His work, for the Father was His constant Companion.¹¹ His authority was not of His own making, but came to Him immediately from the same Source.¹² The very words which He spoke did not belong to Him, but He received them also from the Father.¹³ His was a complete and absolute dependence, and therefore He had a perfect confidence that His life was right. The supreme test of that dependence may be found in the familiar accounts of the hours spent in the Garden of Gethsemane.¹⁴ The shadow

⁹ St. John 6: 38.

¹⁰ St. Luke 6: 12-13.

¹¹ St. John 8: 29.

¹² St. Mt. 11: 27.

¹³ St. John 14: 24.

¹⁴ St. Mt. 26: 36 ff; St. Mk. 14: 32 ff; St. Luke 22: 39 ff; St. John 18: 1 ff.

86 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

of the Cross was already lying over His path, and the suffering and ignominy and failure seemed enough to break the confidence of the strongest of men. But Christ had more than human confidence. He had also a divine dependence. For hours He wrestled in His prayer, holding down the dictates of the human will which cried out against the impending suffering, finally subduing it to the Divine Will which He had come to realize on earth. "Not my will, but thine, be done," was the answer. His dependence was free and unrestrained, and because it was so He could go down out of that Garden with the utmost confidence to face His accusers and unflinchingly to accept the unjust sentence.

There have been multitudes of Christian people who have more or less successfully followed in the way of Christ. Judging from a purely human point of view, it is a difficult matter to determine just what constitutes success, but it is safe to say that a discipleship wanting in confidence will be too vacillating to be successful, and on the other hand one resting only upon self-assurance will not be sufficiently substantial to stand the strain. By an honest dependence on the power of God many have found themselves capable of things of which they would otherwise scarcely have dreamed. Men with no confidence in themselves, and really with no good right to have any such confidence, have found it in a whole-hearted dependence upon their Lord. Psychological explanations may be readily forthcoming, but the fact itself remains and is still rather puzzling. Men and women of naturally retiring and bashful dispositions are made bold with

no natural assurance; unfortunates depraved and humiliated by long bondage to evil habits become strangely sure of themselves with an amazing certainty; many who have been chronically hesitating and undecided are endowed with clear and logical convictions—all because they have learned to depend upon their Master.

On the other side are those afflicted with the notion that they must prove their Christianity by thrusting it everlastingly forward with an ill-advised assertiveness. They seem to have forgotten the over-neglected virtue of Christian humility, and with tactless pugnacity try to make others conscious of a comparative lack of Christian principles. It is a dangerous habit, and far more likely, in the long run, to cripple the work of Christ than to strengthen it. It is making His Gospel a vehicle for the parading of one's own righteousness, and the sight of it will make the honest man ill at ease, if it does not create a feeling of actual abhorrence for such a religious experience. The perpetrators may be sublimely unconscious of the harm they are doing, but without much doubt they are making Christianity a decidedly unattractive spectacle. They are garrulous with their chatter about faith, but really where is there much room for faith in anything but themselves? Sometimes it may seem as though the only way to check them is deliberately to embarrass them, but it is no easy matter to pierce their smooth complacency. These smugly self-sufficient Christians constitute one of the greatest problems vital religion has to solve. What they need is a ringing emphasis upon the practical virtue of dependence.

88 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

Seeking further than these instances of the religious experience of professedly Christian people, it appears that in the modern attitude toward confidence and dependence there is a curious mixture, probably due in large measure to the rapidly changing conditions of modern life. In some directions it might be said that there are today certain general tendencies of the times, more or less clearly defined. It might be said, for instance, that this is a commercial age in distinction to others which have been warlike; or that it is thoroughly practical in distinction to more literary and artistic ages. But in spite of general tendencies, there are other tendencies at work in the world today which are strongly dissimilar. Some of these represent the mixed attitude of the day toward confidence and dependence. To select one or two examples—we might speak, in the first place, of a well developed sense of independence coupled with a great deal of uncertainty; and, in the second place, of the prevalence of a wicked carelessness together with a growing consciousness of responsibility.

Of the first, it seems quite clear that the spirit of independence rises naturally out of the unparalleled development of the past century along industrial and scientific lines. The inventive genius of man during the past few generations has been productive of most astonishing results. By means of clever mechanical contrivances vast quantities of work can now be turned out in a few moments of time. By means of ingenious methods of communication messages may be sent in a flash from one end of the world to the other. Through careful and painstaking scientific experiments and in-

vestigations the conditions of physical health and comfort are improved almost beyond belief. It is possible to travel with a luxury and speed inconceivable to our forefathers. Electricity has been captured and diverted to human ends; the cold of winter has been defied in the habitations of men; the darkness of night has been made fairly negligible through various illuminating devices; the conquest of the air is already in no very distant prospect; and, in general, the luxuries of yesterday have become the necessities of today. All this is extremely conducive to an independent spirit. When one stops to consider what human ingenuity has already achieved, one may well conclude that the day of impossibilities is a myth. Pride is aroused, and rightly so, over that which the brains and the perseverance of men have accomplished, and past achievements promote the idea that if anything is desired with a sufficiently keen desire it will somehow be produced. Hence there results a quiet satisfaction that men are competent to fulfill their own needs. With an undaunted fearlessness they are ready to face any situation and trust to the boundless resourcefulness of the mind of man which has even now converted the world into a veritable fairyland of surprising novelties.

Yet with all this independent self-assurance there is a note of restless uncertainty which may be heard in almost any direction. People are seeking a basis of confidence. Everything is in a state of flux and one wonders where to find a bit of solid ground to stand upon. Economic conditions are being modified; long accepted political institutions are being called in question; morality seems to be

90 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

assuming certain new standards; religious traditions are being severely tested; and altogether it is rather a slippery footing which the modern man is likely to find beneath him. There may be a variety of causes responsible for all this, but certainly one very potent reason lies in the far greater number of people who read widely today than there has ever been before. There is a greater reading public and also there is a tremendous amount more to be read. It used to be that people with ideas were able to publish them only in a limited way, and that there was only a small percentage of the public who could or would read them once they were published. But nowadays a man with an idea and a fair amount of perseverance is generally able to get himself before the public through some one of the innumerable avenues of publicity which are in ceaseless operation. Consequently where the average man of a few generations back had a few ideas and held them very firmly, the average man of today has a multitude of ideas any one of which is likely to change overnight. Two sides of a question used to be publicly debated on a platform while the audience watched eagerly for the blanched face betokening defeat on the part of one of the debaters. Now this quondam audience will sit at home of an evening and read a half-dozen sides of a question in the many newspapers and magazines which can be bought for a trifle. Even the countless public meetings which continually occupy the halls and theaters of every city in the land are supplemented by a confusing mass of controversial literature. People read one thing in this book and another in that. This magazine gives one

His Confidence and His Dependence 91

side of an interesting question and another magazine gives the contrary side, while still others vary at different stages between. In the resulting maze of conflicting opinions and arguments their heads become filled with a mixture of ideas and they have no very strong confidence in any one of them. If not actually bewildered, they are likely to be at least uncertain in their attitude.

In the second place (looking out at a little different angle) modern society exhibits a spirit of gross carelessness and at the same time a strong recognition of responsibility. There is the figure of the dilettante, reproduced in profusion on any of the fashionable boulevards of a large city, who eyes his fellowmen with a dispassionate interest. To him, life is a spectacle enacted by men and women who perforce are involved in its unwelcome vicissitudes, and over which he casts a critical gaze in search of some diverting incident. In a desultory way he picks up vagrant facts and opinions here and there on art or music or religion in order that he may brighten up a conversation with some unexpected sallies. He has no convictions because, in the first place, it is an effort to get them, and, in the second place, it is still more of an effort to keep them. He seldom seeks for that real kernel of truth in his passing pursuits which would be of working value in his own life because his chief concern is only in keeping himself amused. Taken altogether he is consistently careless and indifferent to those matters which pertain to the greater welfare of mankind, and he looks on with perplexity at those strangely serious persons who labor to alleviate the distress of others. The dilettante

92 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

sees no reason for inconveniencing himself to make the world any better. He is quite satisfied with things, and if other people are not, why surely that is their fault and is no possible concern of his. In his own mind he is under obligations to nobody. Should it happen, by any strange freak of fortune, that a horrible scandal or a fearful misfortune should descend upon him, he would expect his associates to comment upon it with the same dispassionate interest that he now evinces himself. A cool indifference is his one settled characteristic.

But in the very face of the carelessness and indifference typified by the dilettante there is a strong and growing realization of social responsibility. The responsibility is no new thing, but in all probability there has never before been such a conscious recognition of it. If there are some in practically all ranks of society who think only of their own desires, so are there also others in all ranks who are actively interested in the needs of their fellow-men. "Social service" is stamped in indelible characters upon the age, and even if it should accomplish no very tangible results it will at least have projected multitudes of people out of themselves and into a broader vision of life than they could otherwise have known. Gradually there seeps into the consciousness of men a conception that they are all brethren in a sense other than poetic. They may still realize their importance as individual persons, but they also realize that it is their social context which gives the importance. Everyone's life is important because it is a part of the social life. Everyone's actions are important because they contribute to the common moral tone of society. No

man, then, has any right to misuse his own life or to make sorry blunders of his own opportunities on the hypothesis that it is nobody's business but his own. That man is an integral part of society, and every injury done to himself will reflect not indirectly but directly upon the society which makes his life possible. Selfishness is not only a bad habit, it is an affront to the community. As men grasp even feebly this larger ideal of life, they realize that He "who went about doing good" knew what it is that makes life worth while. They understand that an ounce of sacrifice is worth a pound of indulgence. They see the folly of the medieval ascetic who tortured himself to magnify his own merit, and they also see the wisdom of the modern man who is willing to undergo severe hardships for the uplift of mankind. Naturally there are scores of different methods by which people think social salvation is to be achieved, but the highly encouraging part of it is that so many are seriously thinking about it at all. And there is no particular harm in experimenting along various lines, as long as it is admitted that they are experiments and too rigid an insistence is not placed upon any particular one as the only possible way. From the present status of society one thing seems to be quite evident—that is, that no one of the many social reforms now being agitated will in itself achieve the desired utopian result. The ultimate solution of the question will undoubtedly come through a modifying and welding together of many schemes. The good points will be extracted and preserved, and the dross will be gradually eliminated. It may mean in this early experimental

94 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

stage an unsightly stirring up of the social pool, but even muddy activity is certainly preferable to stagnant indolence, and the impurities can never be skimmed off until they are brought at least within sight. In any case it is the fact that there is such a deepening sense of social responsibility, in which we are now interested, and for that fact there is real cause to be thankful.

Such is the diversity of attitude which may be plainly discerned among the people of the present time. There is a mixture of assurance and uncertainty, of carelessness and a sense of responsibility, which might seem, altogether, to constitute quite a conundrum. The answer is to be found in the interplay of confidence and dependence as exemplified in Jesus Christ. But that idea of dependence is not entirely welcome to many. They much prefer to hold up their heads very straight and declare in no uncertain terms their independence. This latter has an inspiring sound, and usually is quite impressive. The only difficulty is that real confidence does not go with independence. Confidence rests securely upon dependence. Of course they are dependent whether they acknowledge it or not, for if men and women did not depend upon one another, any society would be a sheer impossibility. As a matter of fact their boasted independence itself is dependent upon their fellowmen, for the latter are the foils to their irresponsibility, they are the ones of whom they are independent. It is no sign of strength to banish all thought of dependence and entertain the deceptive idea that one is sufficient unto one's self. That is merely a sign of folly. Such people will generally be found

hanging secretly to some utterly ridiculous or superstitious notion from which they seek to derive an unhealthy confidence. The strongest characters of history have always been dependent characters, depending usually upon some one fact in particular outside of themselves, and by their unswerving faith in that fact they have discovered an unflinching confidence. Bonaparte had an impregnable faith in his destiny, and he depended upon it with a childish simplicity. It may be understood today that it was nothing more than a poor figment of his own imagination, but to him it was as real as the stars of heaven and he drew an inexhaustible confidence from it. Frederick the Great depended throughout his extraordinary career upon the inflexible discipline of his army. He dared many things with a calm confidence which others might fear even to contemplate, because he was sure of the unquestioning obedience of his soldiers. Pope Innocent III depended very wisely upon the tremendous prestige of the Papacy over the world of his day, and he wrought with a more powerful hand than any Pope before him or since because his dependence was unrestrained. St. Paul in every act of his life depended absolutely upon the Living Christ. Nothing could check him, for his confidence was invincible—"when I am weak then am I strong."¹⁵ Confidence does not issue from independence but from the secure knowledge that one's dependence is well placed.

Every man of confidence will be consciously dependent. The craving for independence has wrecked many a life by robbing it of all its sta-

¹⁵ II Cor. 12: 10.

96 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

bility. But every person who achieves anything is dependent somehow. The difference lies in the kind of thing upon which people depend, and that will vary according to the particular aim of each person. The whole object of existence for some people is the accumulation of wealth, and they will naturally depend upon money in all that they do and will carry a kind of financial confidence. Others bend their energies toward obtaining an enviable reputation, and they will hang breathlessly on all the remarks of their neighbors, which gives them a kind of verbal confidence. Others, again, desire above all else positions of authority and influence, and they rely upon organization and discipline, which gives them a kind of official confidence. But if the goal of a person's efforts is greater than any of these, if it makes wealth and reputation and influence incidental in its vastly larger scope, if this person is seeking *life* in the fullest sense of the word, then he will depend freely and unreservedly upon the Christ who brought the more abundant life, and that will give him a Christian confidence. A dependence on any of these lesser things cannot bring such a confidence, and without dependence of some kind no confidence can be had at all. It makes no difference how strong one's hold may be upon that which is itself weak, it will prove quite powerless to save. Very truly has it been said that a shipwrecked man may fasten a desperate grip upon a floating spar and be tossed hither and thither by the riotous waves, but for all his manly strength he will not be nearly as secure as the little child who stands upon the rock above him. It is in this sense that the "Rock of Ages"

becomes a thoroughly Christian expression. A reckless independence is a ridiculous impossibility in the Kingdom of Christ. The dependence out of which arises an impenetrable confidence Christ has taught in His own human life. To love the Lord God with all the heart and with all the soul and with all the mind—that is the needful dependence. This is of first importance, Christ declares, and it is the greatest commandment,¹⁸ and with that beneath him the Christian walks in a refreshing atmosphere of reassurance, for he has taken the way of his Master and has thereby inherited the confidence which reposed in Him.

¹⁸ St. Mt. 22 : 37-38.

VI

HIS ENERGY AND HIS REPOSE

VI

HIS ENERGY AND HIS REPOSE

LANGUID ease and luxurious laziness are commonly associated with the lands of the tropical belt and the nearby regions as well. Natural conditions there are generally considered to be not at all conducive to bustling activity, but lead rather toward indolence. Where the sun is hot and the air is heavy, where the breezes are fragrant and equally listless, where nature gives abundantly of the fruits of the ground—in such lands the same vigorous energy is not expected as in the regions of more rigorous climate. Even in the lands of the temperate zones nothing is more enervating than an occasional day of blistering, hot sun and heavy, sultry atmosphere. In a hot climate there is not the same incentive to lively activity as there is in a cooler climate. There is not the same invigorating stimulus of sharp, crisp air and brisk, refreshing winds. The warm countries by natural right induce in their inhabitants tendencies to relaxation. They may produce stronger emotions, but, as a general thing, rather less of activity.

The average person probably carries a hazy idea that Palestine is some sort of warm, almost tropical, country such as we have mentioned. They read of the simple outdoor habits of the people of the time of Christ; of the wonderful fertility of the

land, "a land flowing with milk and honey"¹; of the desert places and the carefully guarded wells; of the olives and pomegranates and palm trees—and they picture Christ in the midst of it all with no very good reason for thinking Him particularly energetic. As a matter of fact, Palestine will scarcely bear such a representation. In that small strip of country nature appears in many different aspects. It has its snows as well as its warm rains; it has its frosts as well as its heat; it has its bracing mountain air in the highland as well as its depressing humidity below; it has its running streams as well as its Dead Sea; it has its oaks and pines as well as its palm trees. There is probably no other spot on earth where there is such a striking variety both of geographical and climatic conditions within so small a territorial compass as in this land of holy memories. "In Palestine there is every climate between the sub-tropical of one end of the Jordan Valley and the sub-Alpine above the other end. There are palms in Jericho and pine forests in Lebanon. In the Ghôr, in summer, you are under a temperature of more than 100° Fahrenheit, and yet you see glistening the snow-fields of Hermon. All the intermediate steps between these extremes the eye can see at one sweep from Carmel—the sands and palms of the coast; the wheat-fields of Esdraelon; the oaks and sycamores of Galilee; the pines, the peaks, the snows of Anti-Lebanon. How closely these differences lie to each other! Take a section of the country across Judæa. With its palms and shadoofs the Philistine Plain might be a part of the Egyptian Delta; but on the hills of

¹ Ex. 3:8.

the Shephelah which overlook it, you are in the scenery of Southern Europe; the Judæan moors which overlook them are like the barer uplands of Central Germany, the shepherds wear sheepskin cloaks and live under stone roofs—sometimes the snow lies deep; a few miles farther east and you are down on the desert among the Bedouin, with their tents of hair and their cotton clothing; a few miles farther still, and you drop to torrid heat in the Jordan Valley; a few miles beyond that and you rise to the plateau of the Belkâ, where the Arabs say ‘the cold is always at home.’ Yet from Philistia to the Belkâ is scarcely seventy miles.”²

There is, then, really nothing in the natural conditions of the land which might lead to a prejudiced conception of Christ as unenergetic. Indeed it is only necessary to cast a hasty mental glance over the course of His ministry to arrive at the inevitable conclusion to the contrary. One who accomplished what He did in a period of time not more (and possibly less) than three years in extent must have been fairly alive with energy. Then upon proceeding to a closer examination of the incidents given in the Gospels, it becomes clear that this general impression is quite easily verified. In the first place, there is no reason to doubt that His labors in the carpenter shop in Nazareth were such as would cultivate a spirit of industriousness during the years of His boyhood and early manhood. There is one brief indication in His younger years of the serious acceptance of His duty in the answer which He gave His mother, when after anxious

² Geo. Adam Smith—“Historical Geography of the Holy Land,” p. 56.

search she had finally found Him in the midst of the teachers in the Temple—"How is it that ye sought me? Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?"³ At length, when He was fully launched into His ministry, there came times when the demands of the people were so severe upon Him that He could scarcely get any rest. Sometimes He was obliged to rise before daybreak to find opportunity for quiet prayer.⁴ On one occasion the pressure was so relentless that His friends actually feared for Him.⁵ Sometimes the only way He could escape from the people of one section was by reminding them that His work called Him to others as well as to them.⁶ A vivid instance is the occasion of the Apostles' return from their first missionary journey, when He had the utmost difficulty in securing an opportunity to consult with them privately. At that time His popularity was tremendous. As soon as the people knew of His whereabouts they thronged upon Him and were insistent in their demands. Naturally He desired to discuss with His Apostles what they had done, and to encourage and instruct them in their service for Him while the memory of their first journey was still young in their minds. But the people were coming and going constantly. Every hour was busy. There was always something claiming His attention. As long as He remained within sight of the people they would keep Him continually occupied. It came to the point where they scarcely left Him time for His meals, and from sheer necessity He finally took the

³ St. Luke 2: 49.

⁴ St. Mk. 1: 35.

⁵ St. Mk. 3: 20-21.

⁶ St. Luke 4: 43.

Apostles into a boat, and they went away into the uninhabited parts.⁷ His work took Him from place to place, and He lost no opportunity to press His message home. During that last Holy Week when the days were numbered, when His friends were weakening while His enemies waxed mighty in their jealous hatred, He still lost none of His habitual energy, but went daily in and out among the people teaching and admonishing them in the way of eternal life.⁸ Never is the Master to be found shirking His duties. Never does He appear taking His ease while opportunities slipped by. He was always ready and eager with a powerful energy, and it was by dint of hard work that He fulfilled His mission.

At the same time Christ never wore Himself out with feverish haste to get something done. His work pursued a strong, steady course of progress, but it was free from the ceaseless, turbulent agitation which is frequently injurious to permanency. He never allowed Himself to be subject to such a nervous restlessness as would deprive Him of His self-control and thereby seriously limit His effectiveness. He refused to be hurried forward by an extravagant zeal which might draw the eyes but not the hearts of the people. On the contrary there was always a calm and restful atmosphere about all that He did. If there is evident a strong spirit of energy running throughout His work, there is evident immediately beside it an equally strong spirit of repose. For Christ not only worked, but He also rested. There were times when He deliberately betook Himself far away from the crowds

⁷ St. Mk. 6: 31-32.

⁸ St. Luke 21: 37.

106 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

and sought places where they would be unlikely to follow Him, that He might obtain a little respite from His labors.⁹ One evening, after a hard day of prolonged teaching to a great multitude of people, He and the Apostles set sail across the Sea of Galilee and our Lord went peacefully to sleep in the stern of the boat.¹⁰ During a visit to the home of His friends in Bethany—Mary, Martha and Lazarus—He gently but nevertheless very pointedly rebuked Martha because she fussed and fumed immoderately over her household duties.¹¹ Even during those days immediately preceding His crucifixion when, as we have mentioned, He was busy daily with the energy that accompanies the final touches upon important works, even then He made it a practice to retire each evening to the quiet of the Mount of Olives, and there rested that He might be refreshed for the approaching ordeals and their final culmination.¹² On the evening before He was taken, when He had gathered the Apostles about the Holy Table, He talked at length with them upon the intimate concerns of the Kingdom. But He did not fill their minds with hurried remarks and hasty injunctions as to how this and that was to be done. He did not fret and worry over possible directions which He might have forgotten in the rush of more pressing duties. He did not excitedly rehearse to them the wonders and beauties of His life. All these lesser matters had been cared for during the months past of careful preparation. Those three exquisite chapters of St. John (14, 15 and 16) indicate the wealth of spir-

⁹ St. Mk. 7: 24.

¹⁰ St. Mk. 4: 38.

¹¹ St. Luke 10: 41.

¹² St. Luke 21: 37.

itual consolation and strength which He was to leave with them. They were His friends, and He raised them to a vision of the Loving God which would remain fixed with ineradicable permanence in the inmost recesses of their minds. He concluded by telling them the reason for His words—not for warning, not for exhortation, not to arouse enthusiasm, but “These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.”¹⁸

Always, wherever He might be and whatever task He might have in hand, there was a calm and quiet dignity about Him. He affected no theatrical languor to impress people with His superiority to vulgar excitement. He practiced no studied disinterestedness in the lives and fortunes of His companions. But He was always composed and self-contained. He had too much faith in His mission to lash Himself into wild frenzy, no matter how vindictive and unjust His enemies might be. All His human heart and all His divine love were thrown unreservedly into His message of universal salvation, but with it all He never grew hysterical. He rested physically, mentally and spiritually, and He bore with Him at all times a peaceful calm which issued its own benediction.

These are hurried days in which we live. The tendency is not infrequently in danger of being along the energetic line nearly to the exclusion of the repose. There is a careless way of judging people by the visible effort which they put into their work. Those who are constantly on the rush, too busy to stop, vociferous in their hasty remarks,

¹⁸ St. John 16: 33.

108 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

always on edge to keep track of the many irons in the fire—these are the ones most likely to be called aggressive and strenuous and able to produce results. But it is not at all improbable that our judgment may be entirely wrong. Explosions of nervous energy are no invariable guarantees that things will be well done. Mushroom growths have many metaphorical counterparts in every line of achievement. Stately appearing structures may be reared with incredible speed, but their meager foundations make them dangerously unsafe. Most people are too easily satisfied with alarmingly rapid returns. Men rush headlong into all manner of undertakings with painfully little forethought and then strain every nerve to get something done in order to show people that they are “making good.” Energy is wantonly expended and men are too much occupied with the expenditure to bother over maintaining the supply. A little more ease and deliberation of effort might make returns a bit slower in developing, but they would probably be far stronger and more lasting in the long run. The impulse to admire hugely the man with a tremendous capacity for work might with some wisdom be curbed a trifle until it is known whether this man has also any ability for rest. For work will inevitably suffer unless it is supported and protected by rest.

This is by no means a plea for, or an excusing of, laziness, for laziness can exert as deleterious an influence as the most incessant and nerve-racking toil. What is needed is a better practical realization of this spirit of repose found in Jesus Christ. The truth of the remark is in no wise dimmed by

its frequent repetition, that it is after all not work but worry which kills men, and it might be added that the strongest antidote to worry is faith. There is need of rest, not so much from work, as from the ceaseless pressure which saps away one's vitality. Undoubtedly our forefathers worked and labored as hard as most men today; in many ways, a great deal harder. Yet nervous breakdowns and prostrations from overwork are far more numerous now than they were in proportion a few generations back. Authorities all say that nervous troubles are on the increase. Quiet sanatoria and various means for effecting rest-cures are greatly in demand. Men of this age, however, are scarcely ready to admit that they are suffering under a serious physical deterioration, and there is really no necessity to do so. For the demands of the present civilization they are as competent physically as their progenitors were in their days. The fact is, it is not primarily a physical question at all. It goes far deeper than that. It must be admitted that as yet our knowledge is very scanty, that as yet there is no thoroughgoing explanation of the variety of complaints other than physical in their origin, with which modern society is confronted. But one fact seems quite clear which is important in its bearing on the recuperation of tired-out people. When they are fatigued and worn out, it is not, as is often imagined, because their muscles have been overworked or because their nerves have been laboring overtime. It is a matter of universal physical experience that some muscles never rest and some nerves have no respite from their labors, yet they do not grow weary with

their unceasing exertion. If for any reason the muscles which perform the functions of respiration decided that they were in need of rest some evening, it is obvious that our bodies could not live. Or if the nerves governing the actions of our hearts were ever to become overwearied and suspend operations, there would be the same fatal result. Physical life depends upon the uninterrupted activity of these muscles and nerves. As far as the work is concerned, muscles and nerves might all labor on indefinitely. The one fact which is known is that it is not the work which exhausts people, but it is the conscious attention which they train upon the work.¹⁴ That is why it will often be actually hard work for a physically robust man to perform certain new tasks which another man of very uncertain physical power but accustomed to the tasks would execute with the greatest ease. That is why men sometimes labor and wear themselves out speedily over any new work which will become for them simplicity itself when they have once trained themselves to the habitual methods required. With experience much of everyone's work is done automatically and the worker is not greatly wearied by it because it does not demand the effort of continual close attention. Take a mechanic with fingers of steel and set him to playing the piano. He will be fairly exhausted with a half-hour of simple finger exercises. The trained pianist, however, perhaps with soft and slender fingers, will play easily for hours at a time with no discomfort. But that same pianist in his

¹⁴ Cf. W. Hanna Thomson—"Brain and Personality," pp. 301-308.

turn will soon become exhausted if he applies himself diligently to the subtle interpretation of some musical masterpiece. It is not a question of muscles, it is a question of the conscious directing of one's attention. When people begin to worry over their tasks and are vaguely fearful of mistakes or possible misfortunes, then they quickly consume their store of energy and wear down their strength. Their work may be no heavier, but they are anxiously alert to every particular of it. Things get on their minds and their attention is never diverted. There is a constant pressure which crowds down whatever resiliency they might possess. That is why a mere change of occupation is often one of the best tonics to be found. That is why the man who can get his mind off his work will last longer than the man with the ever-present preoccupied frown. That is why pure inactivity is not always a successful means of rest, because it is possible to become thoroughly tired out with the pressure of a grim determination to do nothing. That, indeed, is why an honest trust in God brings peace of mind to believers.

The application of a driving energy, untempered by any touch or feeling of repose, is bound to set up false standards. In fact it does that very thing today. An apt instance of it may be seen in a word which is echoed far and near by all sorts and kinds of people, which in a proper sense is certainly indispensable, but which is often distorted to an unworthy use where it becomes dangerous to the real welfare of men. That is the word "efficiency." There is an efficiency which cannot be underrated, where it means the consistent ability

112 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

to carry things through. Men so qualified are rightly in continual demand. But there is another kind of efficiency, rather too prevalent for the common good, which seems to mean little more than the craze for quick results, irrespective of the means employed or of the ultimate cost to society. The highly efficient workingman, in accordance with this standard, comes to be the one who will wear himself into inefficiency within a few years for the sake of turning out vast quantities of work as long as he is able. The highly efficient office man comes to be the one who will murder his eyes and riddle his nerves in order that he may leave in his wake a swollen volume of transacted business. Similarly the highly efficient president or manager comes to be that one who will worry his brains into a muddle and turn his hair prematurely white in order that he may exhibit to the world some imposing monuments to his nerve-racking energy. The consequence is that there are hundreds of men, and women too, who from years of experience and a large and broad knowledge ought to be at the very height of their ability, but who really find it increasingly difficult to secure opportunities of employment—because, forsooth, their so-called “efficiency” is on the wane. Men and women who have come to middle age, and who have at least a more mature and reliable judgment than they had a score of years before, are often refused employment because the employers prefer the young and fresh blood which is willing to expend itself with unstinted prodigality, quite thoughtless of what may come later. That is a false efficiency. It is no true efficiency ever, which

seeks the accomplishment of hurried results at the cost of an undeveloped manhood. It is lowering the standard from what is high to what is miserably low, and it is wrong, no matter what the particular cause for it may be. This conception of efficiency fortunately is not held everywhere, but it is held in many quarters, and it is to be sincerely hoped that some day those who hold it may awaken to the fact that the only true economy is the economy of human life. Then they may be willing to sacrifice a few temporary results if need be, in order that they may assist in making better men and women.

The spirit of rush and excitement is caught in the Church life today as well as in the business or social life. It is true that it has not always been so. Time was when the Church was afflicted with a debilitating inertia and rested in her work almost to the point of laziness. Today we are still obliged to bear the reproach of many such mistakes long since outgrown. There have been times when an hour or so of more or less desultory worship of a Sunday comprised nearly all of the Church's public activity. There have been times when vigor has declined and sloth has held sway. But such accusations cannot be brought against the Church at the present time. Today new and energetic motives prompt her to increasing vigorous activities. More and more demands are being made upon the Church, and more and more of them is she accepting. No longer are Church people cut adrift after their Sunday services to wander through the week with no word of encouragement or sympathy or counsel from their Church. Services are held be-

114 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

tween Sundays for the faithful—and also for those who are not so faithful. Clubs and societies and organizations for clean amusement, for instruction, for practical expressions of Christianity in service for others, are being conducted by churches of all descriptions to an astonishing degree. The Church of today is endeavoring to minister to the bodily as well as the spiritual needs of men as far as may be possible, and seeks to prevent the conditions and influences which provoke sin as well as to rescue those who have already succumbed. This modern awakening is surely a God-given impulse, but there is one danger involved which the eye of the Church must not overlook. It is possible to multiply Church activities to the point of seriously minimizing those high spiritual values for which the Church must stand first of all. There may be cultivated such a rushing, roaring energy in the Church that it becomes a dwelling-place of ecclesiastical machinery rather than the House of God. The workers may be making so much noise with the tools with which their labor is being done that they drown out the voice of God which should guide the course of their efforts.

It should never be lost from view that the primary object of the Church of Christ is to bring Christ to men and men to Christ. Everything else holds secondary place. And when one thinks of the spirit of repose which is inseparable from the whole life of the Master, it becomes quite evident that the work for Him must be done in a similar spirit. Slothful neglect on the part of the Church is undoubtedly a glaring sin, but it is just as well to keep it in mind that the possibility of sin lies not

alone in the line of inactivity. There may be such a thing as a sin of over-exertion.

A corresponding care is also required in the life of the individual Christian. He may be so deeply immersed in performing tasks for Christ that he quite forgets about Christ Himself. Sometimes one may hear people rebuking others so vehemently for a breach of good manners that they far overstep the bounds of ordinary courtesy in administering the rebukes. Similarly they may be stirred up in their interest in Christian service to the point where they will be spiritually driven, and in the host of surging activities they lose Him who is the Source of the personal Christian life.

Christ Himself shows the way out of all such difficulties when He teaches by His own example the possibility of the interaction of a living energy and a calm repose. There is nothing to be found in His life which might excuse spiritual indolence, but there is also nothing which approves of the wild dissipation of spiritual energy. The same Christ who said to His disciples—"We must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work,"¹⁵ said also to His disciples—"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled."¹⁶

It is a false imagination, which is very easily disproved by the test of experience, that time spent in quiet companionship with God is time impractically squandered, never to be recovered. Really it is very far from it. The proper use of such time

¹⁵ St. John 9:4.

¹⁶ St. John 14:27.

means the storing up of spiritual energy against the time of demand. Looking at it from a purely utilitarian point of view, inadequate as such a point of view must be, this period of rest with God will react upon subsequent work among men with a vigorous stimulus to healthy activity. Christ distinctly asks that Christianity shall not settle itself into a comatose state of ridiculous uselessness. The will of God is to be done, and Christians are to be the doers as well as hearers of His word. But on the other hand, when they do put it into effect, it is to be upheld and sustained by an untroubled reliance upon God. He who would bring his life into anything like conformity with the life of Christ will not exhaust his spiritual resources by an improvident neglect of replenishment. He will draw near "in full assurance of faith," and will let the peace of God comfort him and lay the foundations of his Christian building. Jesus Christ labored, and He also rested. He was full of a powerful energy, and He was never lacking in quiet repose. And Jesus Christ did His work very well indeed.

VII

HIS SIMPLICITY AND HIS KEENNESS

VII

HIS SIMPLICITY AND HIS KEENNESS

IT was in the course of the Galilean ministry of Christ that He returned one day from a trip across the Sea of Galilee and landed probably at or very near the city of Capernaum. For some time He had moved among these people and His fame had spread with considerable rapidity. Consequently there was soon assembled a company of people to escort Him on His way. No doubt it was a mixed crowd, made up in part of some who had benefited by His healing touch, partly of the critical ones, partly (perhaps largely) of the curious. But there was at least one in the number who was in dire distress and who had great faith that Christ could supply his needs. It was Jāirus, one of the rulers of the synagogue, whose little daughter was grievously ill. He fell at the Master's feet, beseeching Him to come and lay His hands upon her that she might be healed. Christ set out with Jāirus, but was interrupted on the way, and before they arrived at the home word reached them that it was no use, for the child was dead. But Christ counseled them not to lose faith, and when He came to the house He put forth the mourners and with only the parents and three of the Apostles accompanying Him went into the room where the child lay. Taking her by the hand

120 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

He spoke to her and she arose and was restored to her amazed and grateful parents. Then while they all stood before Him in awe and wonder, "He commanded that something should be given her to eat."¹

What an ordinary, unimportant sort of thing it was for Him to say. It might seem, at first glance, as though it comes in an exceedingly inappropriate place just at the close of one of His most remarkable miracles. One might expect Him, at the very least, to have made it an occasion for pointing them to the marvelous power and mercy of God. It is descending from the sublime, not to the ridiculous, but, as it were, to the commonplace. Yet the more one thinks of it, the more will it become plain that it is not so much a leaving of the sublime to enter the commonplace as it is a bringing of the sublime into the commonplace. It is one of the many marks which go to make the Gospel precious to the simplest hearts. With all His greatness and power and majesty Christ was yet so natural that even the humblest of men can feel the immediate touch of a common fellowship. In this instance He was bringing the power of God into that home and in the very act was teaching them a lesson of simple thoughtfulness. The child had been seriously ill and undoubtedly had lost much strength. Now she would certainly be in need of food, and Christ with His quick sympathy realized it and asked that some food be given her.

A moment's reflection on the cruel results of thoughtlessness which are, even in these most modern times, of daily and hourly occurrence will suf-

¹ St. Mk. 5:43.

fice to show that it was no insignificant lesson which the Master taught that day. Under a passive exterior many a sensible-minded person is often deeply hurt by inconsiderate remarks flung out at random by thoughtless associates. There is such a thing as oversensitiveness, but even so no one has a right completely to disregard the feelings of another person. There is many a man breaking his heart in disconsolate loneliness because no one stops to think of the saving virtue that may abide in a mere touch of human companionship. Indeed it would be appalling if people could know of the extent of misery and downright suffering which blight and wither the lives of men and women all about them for no greater reason than sheer thoughtlessness on the part of those who ought to know better. No doubt there are scores of people starving to death this very day in the midst of all our lofty modern civilization because someone has thoughtlessly neglected certain matters which demanded speedy and prompt attention. The plea of thoughtlessness offers a frequent and plausible excuse, but its consequences more than occasionally assume disastrous proportions. Therefore when it is pointed out that our Lord in this instance taught a very simple lesson of common thoughtfulness, it is not to be passed over as a matter of small moment.

If, back in those Galilean days, Christ had gone among the people surrounded by a thick air of mystery, always occupied in upholding a weighty dignity and anticipating the fawning reverence of His followers, thinking much of His own position and little of the needs of mankind—could anyone

122 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

suppose that millions of people would be bearing His Name today? He was so easily simple and perfectly natural in His dealings with men and women that He always finds a ready response in human nature. There was never any of that superficial cleverness about Christ which gives currency to so much spurious knowledge. He was never carefully astute and deceptively half-veiled in His associations with men. He found no need to practice pretense, but there was always present with Him a majestic simplicity which was often too much even for His disciples to grasp. On one occasion when the Apostles asked Him when the day should come in which all things would be fulfilled, He answered simply that He did not know.² There was no need for Him, living as Man among men, to know of that hour and He said so very naturally, offering no evasive circumlocutions. When His enemies fumed and stormed at the claims which He made for Himself and His teaching, He offered them the simplest kind of advice. He did not proceed upon an elaborate argument to crush their opposition by force of hard logic, nor did He offer them subtle dissertations which might confuse them into silence. He quoted their own Scriptures and then asked them simply to watch Him and draw their own inferences—"If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works."³ Christ never found it necessary to disguise His human needs such as are common to all men, with any false idea that He ought to be above them. There were times when He was hungry,

² St. Mk. 13:32.

³ St. John 10:37-38.

His Simplicity and His Keeness 123

just as everyone else is hungry; ⁴ there were other times when He was thirsty; ⁵ and there were times also when He was physically weary. ⁶ All through His life will be found these marks of simple naturalness, which undoubtedly constitute one of the strongest points of approach to the Christian faith.

It may seem at a glance, to be a mere twisting of terms, but nevertheless it is true that, as the words are commonly used, there is an immense difference between the man who is simple and the man who has the quality of simplicity. The former, a simple person, means one who is not bright, one who is somewhat deficient mentally. But the latter means one whose life is clear and undimmed by deceit or craftiness. Now, that kind of simplicity is very penetrating. It cuts most unexpectedly through the guile and double-dealing of those who would attempt to ensnare it. There is a keenness about an honest simplicity which puts aside subterfuge and goes straight to the heart of the matter. That is the reason so many people who appear to be ignorant and remarkably unsophisticated will often turn the tables completely on the worldly-wise one who is attempting some clever deceit, and expose such a one with most embarrassing frankness.

It is that clear, uncontaminated keenness of a pure simplicity which shows itself in Jesus Christ. Instances might be multiplied of it, for one of the commonest tasks Christ took upon Himself was the branding of all manner of trickery and sham and dissimulation. Even in His most unassertive

⁴ St. Mt. 21:18.

⁵ St. John 4:6.

⁶ St. John 19:28.

124 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

moments He would never allow Himself to be imposed upon. Time after time His adversaries tried to beguile Him into unguarded statements or trick Him into false positions, and invariably He proved Himself too keen for the deception. Take, for instance, the captious question about paying tribute to Cæsar. His enemies dared not attack Him openly, so they resorted to a ruse. "Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Cæsar or not?"⁷ Here was an opportunity to thrust Him into a dilemma. If He answered in the affirmative, then He would at once stand in bad favor with the common people, for they hated the burden of Roman taxation and all that went with it with a consuming hatred. But, on the other hand, if He replied in the negative, then His words might easily be made to smack of treason against the Roman government, and He would receive small mercy at the hands of the governing officials. But Christ was not to be so easily deceived. He recognized at once that it was no legitimate question but only an endeavor to entangle Him. Therefore He deftly turned the whole question back upon the questioners. Calling for a coin He showed it to them and asked whose image it bore. Upon their reply that the image was Cæsar's, He promptly told them that it was their duty to pay Cæsar in his own coin, but that inasmuch as they themselves were made in the image of God they were under similar obligations to pay God in His coin by righteous and holy living, and how well were they fulfilling that peculiarly Jewish duty? On another occasion a ruler of the synagogue became highly indignant because

⁷ St. Luke 20:22.

Christ cured a woman on the Sabbath of an infirmity of very long standing. Christ entered upon no lengthy argument over the Law. He cut straight to the root of the question and declared that if good Jews could loose their cattle on the Sabbath to take them out to water after a few hours of confinement in the stalls, how could it possibly be wrong for Him to loose one of the very daughters of Abraham from an infirmity which had bound her for some eighteen years?⁸ Or again, the Pharisees came to Him one day during the course of the Peræan ministry. They were very anxious to entice Him down into Judæa, where it would be easier to take Him and work their will upon Him. Thinking to frighten Him out of the district, they snatched up some remark of Herod Antipas' and brought it to Christ, telling Him He had better make good His escape while there was yet time, for Herod was seeking to kill Him. But again He saw through their pretended friendship, and answered in those rather startling words—"Go and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I am perfected."⁹ There was no tampering with Christ on irrelevant matters and false issues. He was altogether too keen for that. Trickery and deceit blushed in open shame before His clear simplicity.

All this gives rise to a reproachful moral which comes very close home in these days when the maintaining of appearances frequently overshadows things of more vital importance. Not many can plead immunity to the desire to be thought

⁸ St. Luke 13: 10-17.

⁹ St. Luke 13: 32.

clever and witty by their friends and acquaintances, and led on by such a desire they sacrifice their naturalness for the sake of making impressions. It is easy to cast insinuations which are a trifle off color and perhaps not altogether true, if they will provide a bit of momentary popularity, and meanwhile consciences may be smoothed over with the trite excuse that "everyone does it" and anyhow everybody makes allowances and no harm is done. As a matter of fact it is the notorious truth that scarcely anybody makes allowances, but that all such stories grow marvelously with the telling. It may not be exactly the fact that Mr. So-and-so does such-and-such things, but it makes an excellent bit of news and affords an exceptional opportunity for the display of one's imaginative resources. Attention is drawn to the narrator, and he is flattered in leading people to remark that he is very quick to seize upon interesting facts and exceedingly entertaining in relating them. Of course such impressions are here one moment and gone the next, for the most part, and if they are retained by the hearers they certainly bear an unsavory quality. But little concern is likely to be given to that. It is hard to learn that it is an honest simplicity which makes the best and most lasting impressions. Loquacious friends may be delightfully entertaining with vivid accounts of their many picturesque exploits. They may describe with charming abandon how they have fooled this one, and deceived that one, and cheated another with consummate cleverness. They may flatter without end with their well-timed compliments which others have spoken or which they

came near speaking or hinted at or something of that sort. But these friends are not the ones who are remembered with happy recollections in after years when minds go back to those whose influence has been most truly helpful. By far the most pleasant thoughts then will be of those who have been simple and natural and true, and who for that very reason have called forth what has been really the best.

With very little effort there rise to one's lips frequent deprecating remarks about what are called the "criminal classes," meaning those who deliberately break the laws of the land and who become swiftly changeable laws unto themselves. But there is another class of citizens, numbering multitudes within its ranks, who seldom break the laws but who are nevertheless as great if not a greater menace to the best interests of society. It is quite impossible to draw lines of demarcation about this class, for its obscure membership reaches far out into the most unsuspected quarters. Keenness is their chief stock in trade, and their keenness expresses itself, on the one hand, in an accurate knowledge of the exact point beyond which legal penalties are encountered, and, on the other hand, in a penetrating scrutiny of their fellowmen to determine the degree of their gullibility. Some of this class obviously live by their wits. They make no pretense of any regular occupation and watch for opportunities to fleece the unwary. Old tricks dressed up in modern clothes are perpetrated over and over again, and the supply of victims seems never to become exhausted. If they are caught and accused, they have a score of handy expedients

128 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

which have often proved their worth. Their sole object in life is to fool people and they become so adept in the art that the man who is honestly pursuing a legitimate business is at a distinct disadvantage with them. They are keen beyond question. They are clever and sometimes unexpectedly intelligent, but they play havoc with the progress of many a reputable enterprise.

These professional deceivers form, as it were, the nucleus of this rather indeterminate class. But far out beyond them are crowds of others, more numerous by a great way than one can acknowledge with any comfort, who are regularly engaged in definite lines of business, but whose eyes open and close at strangely psychological moments. It would be a lamentable breach of etiquette to accuse them of dishonesty, but they are so habitually active in sharp practices and polite equivocations that one wonders sometimes what else to call it. Every trade has them, every business, every profession. They take it as a matter of course that people should deceive each other. Good business to them means a crafty ability to carry through questionable enterprises without being too greatly suspected by their neighbors. There is but one inexcusable crime to them, *viz.*, to be caught. It may be a matter of common gossip that they can be trusted only to a certain well-defined point, but as long as they are shrewd enough to create nothing more than suspicions they feel perfectly justified in demanding the respect of the community. There are some men who never enter on a business undertaking without expecting dishonesty and therefore they are prepared to fight fire with fire. Of course

it is wrong, they will tell you, but it's business, and they cannot be expected to endanger their own affairs out of a sentimental idea of theoretical piety. If they conform to the conventional moral demands of society, and refrain from making themselves public disgraces, they believe they are quite fulfilling all that should be required of them.

This is not an arraignment of business ethics, nor is it a sweeping criticism of all business men. Many, perhaps the majority, are above this sort of thing, and the tendency today is in an encouraging direction. But there are more than the passing observer might see who accept as their natural right the privilege of overreaching their associates as far as is possible without danger of detection. The remedy undoubtedly lies in a simpler conception of moral responsibilities. It is necessary to continue and magnify the insistence that men shall hold firmly to moral principles in distinction to a mere compliance with conventional items of respectability. Everyone knows very well that men can abide strictly by the letter of the law and yet be guilty of unspeakable injustice. Everyone knows that men can speak words which are beyond question literally true, and yet convey a totally false impression to their hearers. Let them get beyond the realm of technicalities and into the clearer atmosphere where principles rather than specific requirements have free play, and then with simple sincerity of purpose they will seek justice and truth and honesty and righteousness, irrespective of any particular means of expression. They may be as keen and clever as they ever were before, but their keenness will mean far more to them than

130 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

the intuitive ability to take unfair advantage of other people.

This is a matter of simplification, and there are a considerable number of ways in which a little simplifying would not be altogether amiss today. There is room for a large amount of it in much of the modern political machinery, in order that responsibility may not so easily be consigned to a comfortable oblivion. There might be room for a generous injection of it into the legal procedure of modern courts of law as well. The average layman, involved in the intricacies of the law, if not completely bewildered will at least be seriously annoyed and inconvenienced by apparently unnecessary delays. Of course even the layman understands that safeguards are necessary even if wearisome, but the objections are not confined to his quarter. Many eminent jurists are voicing their opinions in no uncertain terms as to the need for careful revision of our methods of legal action. There certainly is room for more of simplification in our social standards, in order that social rating might rest somewhat more securely on the personal worth of the individual. In fact, simplicity has a very wide field of possible operation in the civilization of the present day.

But looking at it in a large way, the greatest growing need is not so much a simplifying of certain things and conditions in piece-meal fashion as it is what might be called a simplified philosophy of life. By this is not meant a "return to nature," divesting oneself of the modern conveniences and comforts, and deliberately assuming outgrown hardships of primitive living. That kind

of "simple life" may have its own limited advantages, but the greater thing to be sought is a coherent unifying of modern desires and tendencies which may offer a simple and intelligible purpose to modern men and women. Of course as civilization advances life is bound to become more complex; there are more things to be done, and more people to do them; there are new wants arising and new means being discovered and invented to supply them. But the diversity of interests only increases the need of a unifying purpose to bind them together. From one side come the pregnant deductions of the comparatively new science of eugenics—new, at least, as a science. This is the effort to minister to the bodily needs of man both of our own day and of future generations, to increase physical efficiency and to create a better assurance of physical fitness in the years to come. From another direction come the insistent cries of modern psychology, also of comparatively recent date as an organized science. This is the attempt to minister to the mental needs of men, to bring mental aptitudes into harmony with the conditions of life and as far as possible vice versa. It has severely modified, sometimes practically reversed, the treatment of criminals and delinquents, and has wrought revolutions in educational ideas. From still another quarter comes the call of social improvement, which is the endeavor to minister to the social needs of men, to stimulate them to higher ideals by giving them cleaner and more wholesome surroundings of life. And then there is that rather less definite but equally real interest in spiritual things which in spite of its endless

132 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

vagaries is exerting an increasingly powerful influence. Some claim one of these and some another as of fundamental importance, but what is most important of all is that they all shall be brought together where each may contribute its share to a unified purpose for human progress in the broadest possible sense. That is what might well be called a real philosophy of modern life. Some day there will arise one of those truly great men, colossal in his simplicity, who will interweave those desires and aspirations into one gleaming golden thread about which the efforts of men shall cluster. Then the strivings of this fickle age, incoherent as they may sometimes seem, will not have been in vain.

Such considerations necessarily lead back to Jesus Christ and His Gospel. In Him is to be met the Divine Simplicity. One of the essentially Christian duties is to see to it that Christianity remains simple and natural. Any spirit of false reverence which cultivates spiritual stiffness and sets Christ off apart from modern human life is to be ruthlessly destroyed. Naturalness in Christianity makes it refreshing and vivifying, and instills into it a touch of honest sincerity. There are those stories which everyone will recall and over which everyone has smiled appreciatively about the naïve way in which children receive the Gospel. With a naturalness and simplicity delightful to behold, they approach God in their prayers and say things which adults would never dream of saying, but often the advantage lies not in the adult's superior wisdom, but in the simplicity of the child. A little fellow may cheerfully fall on his knees

and ask God to bless and be good to everybody "except John because I don't like him." His elders smile knowingly at his ingenuousness and then go on their knees asking God in their more intelligent way to bless all mankind, but instead of saying it they keep the excepted person quietly in their hearts. And after all, which is likely to be the more pleasing in the eyes of God, the child who says it, or the adult who only thinks it and wishes it silently? It is no wonder that Christ told His disciples that they must become as little children to find their way into His Kingdom.¹⁰ Christ is too simple and natural for men to be only veneered in their loyalty to Him.

Possibly it may appear a bit difficult at first to reconcile this simplicity and naturalness with the keenness which is really a practical necessity for honest men, lest they become altogether deceived by their less conscientious neighbors. But if the simplicity is real and not that simple-mindedness of which we have spoken above, then the irreconcilability will vanish. Christ was well aware of the fact that those who were to carry forward His work must be keen enough to cope with the open opposition and also with the meretricious enticements of His enemies, and He spoke significant words of warning to His Apostles before sending them out as "sheep in the midst of wolves." "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," He told them.¹¹ They were not to be made a laughing-stock because of their insipid ignorance. Christ's message was not a beautiful, impractical theory; it was for practical living in the world. So

¹⁰ St. Mt. 18: 3.

¹¹ St. Mt. 10: 16.

they were to be wise in their dealings with men, but they must be quite harmless in their wisdom. A long step would be taken in effecting cures for crowds of present-day evils if people would live out that one brief text from Christ's Gospel. The trouble lies in the unholy desire, which is so easily acquired, to turn all their wisdom and all their knowledge of life and of men and of affairs to their own immediate profit, until they are willing to inflict all manner of injury upon those who are not quite so wise, for the sake of accomplishing their purposes. They have a flippant way of remarking that if the others know no better, then they deserve to be hurt. They remember plenty of things about the serpents, but they conveniently forget most of the corresponding things about the doves.

The conclusion of it all amounts to something like this: God has plenty of wisdom for all, and for those who do their Christian duty simply and naturally for Him He will supply the rest. The paramount endeavor must be for single service of the Master, work not in a divided spirit which may be at cross purposes with itself, but work in a single spirit of service for Christ. Then the clearness of purpose in the lives of honest Christians will penetrate into and through the double and doubtful purposes in the lives of those who are using Christ for their own advantage. It is the whole-hearted, childlike faith in Him for which Christ asks, and as for the rest—"if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."¹²

¹² St. Jas. I: 5.

VIII

HIS RESOLUTENESS AND HIS PATIENCE

VIII

HIS RESOLUTENESS AND HIS PATIENCE

IT is not always the easiest thing to say exactly what one means. If it were, a large amount of misunderstanding would be avoided, for it is very certain that a good share of human difficulties arise not from conflicting ideas but from the careless statements of the same or similar ideas. Even when most carefully used, human speech has its manifold limitations in expressing human thoughts. One word often calls for many others to explain it if the speaker is to escape misapprehension. This is the case with this characteristic of Christ which stands in contrast with His patience. There seems to be no one word which altogether expresses its meaning, and for want of a more exact term we use the rather indistinct word "resoluteness." It means firmness or determination, but that is only part of what it means. It means perseverance or persistence, but more than that also. It means the strong and inflexible adherence to the exalted standards and lofty principles of His Gospel in the face of everything which might urge Him to lower or compromise them. If His words were despised, He never retracted them; or if the people were ignorantly unappreciative, He never adulterated His message to conform to their lower standards—He preferred to let them grow into an understanding of its worth. He

138 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

would not be forced or frightened or deceived or cajoled into emasculating His doctrine to suit either people or conditions. No false notion of temporary expediency was ever strong enough to persuade Him to modify the Truth to secure an advantage for His cause. He knew that the principles of His Gospel were unchangeable and eternal. They were not made to fit the world, but the world was to be shaped by them. Therefore with fearless resoluteness He upheld His principles and would alter them for no man.

There are many illustrations of this characteristic to be found in the Gospels. Take, for instance, His words to the multitude at Capernaum the day after the feeding of the five thousand. The people were eager and enthusiastic over the way in which He had provided for their bodily needs the day before, and now they came with curious haste to see what would happen next. But, as usual, Christ had no desire to be made an interesting spectacle for the multitudes, a kind of seven-days' wonder, who could elicit a temporary roar of attention. And at the same time He would not have His mission degraded in the eyes of the people to the mere performing of strange acts which were beyond their comprehension. Even though their bodies had been filled, their souls were still in need of nourishment whether they knew it or not, and Christ began to teach them the higher lesson from the lower. He warned them against too great an interest in the loaves and fishes, and urged the importance of the "Bread of Life" which He was prepared to give them. Many of the people were not interested in that side of it. They had en-

joyed the consternation He was able to produce among them. They liked the novelty and strangeness of it. But when He pointed them to their own spiritual starvation, they called His words a "hard saying" and were no longer very much concerned. "Upon this many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him."¹

If Christ had been desirous of securing a following in order to boast of the number of His converts, this would have offered a splendid opportunity. He might have reasoned that an increase in the number of adherents would advance His cause enough to justify a few concessions on the real issues involved. He might have argued that it was a poor policy to run the risk of driving supporters away by insisting upon the deep spiritual significance of His message. But Christ recognized always that He was dealing with eternal values, and that a small following thoroughly imbued with the true spirit of His Gospel would, in the long run, achieve far better results. And, in any case, the truth must be upheld. So it was that, upon another occasion, when certain ones came professing a desire to follow Him, He told them that even He had not so much as a place to lay His head, and that those who accepted His cause would find it necessary to give up everything.² He never made any concessions to induce half-hearted followers to crowd about Him. Once when the Pharisees came complaining that His disciples transgressed the tradition of their forefathers by their neglect of ceremonial lustrations, He quickly showed them where they themselves transgressed the command-

¹ St. John 6: 66.

² St. Mt. 8: 18-22.

ment of their God. Then His disciples came to Him and fearfully asked if He realized that it was the Pharisees whom He had been reproaching.³ Many a worldly-wise man would have cleverly approached the Pharisees at such a time and would have considered it well worth shading off a principle to gain their good-will or at least to evade their displeasure. To many that would appear to have been the eminently practical thing for Christ to do. But no such idea seems to have found lodgment in His mind. He would minimize nothing to court their favor. He spoke parables against them and made the parables so plain that there was no mistaking the intent with which they were uttered.⁴ He was equally resolute also with the Apostles, as may be seen, for example, when He severely reprimanded St. Peter for attempting to interfere with the necessary progress of His work.⁵ Always there was a confident resoluteness which would allow nothing to displace it.

Once resoluteness is found in the character of Christ, one is obliged to look further for the other quality which will supplement it and possibly soften it. It is not that resoluteness is in danger of becoming stubbornness, for the latter has to do with incidentals where the former is concerned with principles. The stubborn man is one who insists on some triviality whether there is a reason for it or not, simply because he wants to. But when the resolute man maintains his principles he does so on the grounds of a reasonable faith in those principles. But there is something needed to keep reso-

³ St. Mt. 15: 1-14.

⁵ St. Mt. 16: 23.

⁴ St. Mk. 12: 12.

luteness from becoming so sufficient unto itself that it is coldly inconsiderate of everything else. It is in the virtue of patience that this necessary quality resides, and Christ was possessed of infinite patience. He insisted on upholding the highest of standards before His people, but when they lamentably failed to rise to His standards or even to comprehend them, He was always patient with their shortcomings. He never made excuses for them or allowed them to excuse themselves. He would in no way make light of their failures. He would never qualify His own high principles to conform to their weaknesses. But at the same time He was infinitely patient with them in all their mistakes and blindness. Time after time, in the most discouraging fashion, the Apostles themselves failed sadly to catch the spirit of His work and brought unworthy motives or ill-judged impulses into play, and He patiently corrected them and set them right. Patiently He explained to them the parables they did not understand,⁶ and with equal patience He taught them what things were of truly lasting value.⁷ Once He found the Apostles quarreling and disputing with one another as to the most honorable positions in His Kingdom. It seems almost inconceivable how they could have wandered so far from the spirit of His message, yet He did not excitedly lose His temper about it. He patiently reminded them that he would be first who was most truly the servant of all.⁸ When, at another time, some of them thought to magnify Him and at the same time establish their own prestige by forbidding one not

⁶ St. Mk. 4: 10. ⁷ St. Luke 10: 20. ⁸ St. Mk. 9: 34.

142 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

of their number to do good in the Master's name, He overruled their exclusiveness and gave them a fresh glimpse of the largeness of the Kingdom.⁹ When St. Peter asked Him to place a mathematical limit upon the virtue of forgiveness, He told him a special parable to illustrate its unrestricted operations.¹⁰ Again, when He had warned St. Peter of the temptation which awaited him and St. Peter had fallen before it and had shamelessly denied Him, it took just one reproachful glance to bring the Apostle down upon humbly penitent knees.¹¹ Even when the people misunderstood Him to the point of permitting His death upon Calvary, He patiently recognized their ignorance and asked—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."¹² And after the crisis was passed and the resurrection was accomplished, there was the same loving patience with St. Thomas when his faith faltered and doubts engrossed him.¹³ Of course when His enemies came with their attempts to beguile Him, and made dishonest and insincere professions, then He spoke plainly and pointedly. But for those who were in earnest His patience was inexhaustible even in the face of rank failure. He did not rail at them or scold them. He was not bitter or sarcastic toward them. But patiently He led them and encouraged them in the way of life.

There is not a little of welcome reassurance for the men and women of today in this fact of the Master's patience. That headstrong presumption,

⁹ St. Luke 9: 50.

¹⁰ St. Mt. 18: 21-35.

¹¹ St. Luke 22: 61.

¹² St. Luke 23: 34.

¹³ St. John 20: 27.

from which few can plead total innocence, leaves a trail of clumsy shortcomings which are not very beautiful for inspection. Were men driven to believe in a God who was captious and petulantly exacting with His people, religion for them would probably become a sham or they would have to blind themselves to their own weaknesses. It is true that both these things have been done with the Christian Gospel. Christ has been presented as such an inflexibly relentless Judge that no avenue of mercy remains open for erring mortals, and discipleship under Him becomes unreal in order to save itself from misery and torture. And, on the other hand, a similar conception of Christ has forced some Christians in the other direction where they claim exemption from all wrong and profess complete impeccability. To say the least, it is far more true to the Master's dealings with those who accompanied Him during His ministry, as those dealings are recorded in the Gospels, to recognize His knowledge of human nature and His endless patience with human weaknesses. That gives a Christianity true to the facts and wholesome in its effects.

Here are two characteristics, then, resoluteness and patience, which are necessary to one another, either one being greatly weakened by standing alone. To disunite them is to dissipate the force of either or both of them. Possibly the present-day need for resoluteness is no more pressing than it has been at other times, but it is certainly quite pronounced. There is need of a great deal more of the spirit of conviction, and rather less of the spirit of compromise. The largely prevailing habit

144 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

of trimming one's convictions to suit one's interests is not conducive either to strength of character for the trimmer or to the good health of the convictions. Here is where people easily become opportunists where opportunism means getting the most out of every situation irrespective of the possible sacrifice of a few principles. The opportunist believes that principles are like umbrellas, to be carried when abnormal conditions make them peculiarly desirable, and that the man who carries his principles everywhere is as foolish and impractical as the man who encumbers himself with his umbrella in clear weather and wet alike. He has no objections to principles; in fact, he is rather kindly disposed toward them, as long as they do not interfere with his getting about what he wants. His theory of expediency is all-inclusive. If it is expedient to have principles, then by all means he must have them. But it is seldom expedient to have very many at once, and it is never expedient to have any permanent ones. It does not take a bad man for this sort of thing. It merely takes one who is somewhat more eager to achieve success than he is conscientious about doing what is right, and that probably embraces a solid majority.

The consequence is that most communities possess crowds of very respectable and decent people who will sit quietly in their homes and deplore the evils of the day in all seriousness, but who will not bestir themselves one inch to assist in the eradication of the evils. As far as they are personally concerned they may keep themselves free from any participation in them, because that would be

against their moral principles. But they have no real convictions back of the principles. They are lacking in resoluteness. In one breath they express their distress at conditions which are a disgrace to modern civilization, and in the next breath they are describing them as "necessary evils." They believe in such things as absolute honesty and reliability and moral integrity, on general principles, but they would scarcely think of advocating them very strongly for the modern business man or politician or member of any profession (except possibly for the clergy, and even there they will generously concede that a clergyman must also be human). So it is not greatly to be wondered at that throngs of respectable business men have very low ethical standards; that there is still a quantity of corruption in political circles; and that "quack" professional men are altogether too prevalent a menace. The principles are there, but there is need of some sound convictions back of them, and then there is the additional need of the courage of one's convictions. In a word, there is need of resoluteness.

This is not to say that all compromise is despicable, for sometimes it is the only feasible course. If there is a certain plan or scheme for effecting improvement in some direction, and it is possible to carry through only part of the improvement, then its advocates will wisely compromise on as much as they can get. "Half a loaf is better than none," but a principle will not submit to any such division. If it is possible to get only five streets cleaned out of ten which need attention, then it is wisdom certainly to take the five and be thank-

146 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

ful it is not two, but the real standard of cleanliness will not be affected a particle by the compromise. But if, for the sake of a special privilege in some other matter, an agreement is made to declare those streets clean when only half the rubbish is removed, then there is a serious lowering of standards and a compromise of the principles of cleanliness.

There is a wonderfully inspiring work of art for some person of vivid imagination to produce some day, in picturing the stupendous results which would follow if everyone actually lived up to one's principles. It would fairly make people catch their breath to think how quickly bad conditions could be wiped out and replaced with good, how easily what ought not to be could be changed into what ought to be, if all would bring into active play the good sentiments of which they approve in conversation. For with the vast majority of people the difficulty lies not so much in persuading them that righteousness and honesty and purity are both right and desirable, as in getting them to do anything about it. If they would only determine to maintain and stand by their principles with unswerving resoluteness, the battle would be won with the first onslaught. The most exasperating hindrance to aggressively good work is not so much in the open opposition it meets as in the dragging incubus of those who agree with the purpose of the work but stand around waiting for someone else to prove they are right. Vigorous convictions are needed about these things, convictions which will not give ground a single step. If men believe in honesty, in decency, in righteous-

ness, in purity, then they need to stand by their beliefs, elevate their standards, maintain their principles, and make not one small concession to the pleas of false expediency. It was the resoluteness of the Old Testament prophets (not, as one might suppose, the royal power of the kings of Israel) through which the Hebrew nation was enabled to weather many a stormy period. Likewise it was through the fearless resoluteness of the Maccabees that the life of the Jewish people was preserved at all against the wild wrath and the countless armies of the Syrian throne. It was also through the unshaken resoluteness of the early Christian martyrs that the power of Roman paganism was finally broken. Always, wherever a wrong has been righted or a shameful abuse abolished, it has been done because some men had burning convictions and uncompromising principles, and by their unfaltering resoluteness they at length won their way into a sufficient number of consciences to provoke the desired result. A little more of that spirit might profitably be assimilated today, with great benefit to present conditions and also to coming generations.

This, however, is only one side of a two-sided question. If resoluteness is in demand, so also is patience to accompany it. Once a strong, determined position is taken for certain standards and ideals with a sound conviction back of them, then it is not at all unlikely that an unreasonable impatience will show itself in regard to such ideals. It is no easy matter to believe whole-heartedly that there is some certain thing which mankind most needs, and still be patient with the cool indifference

148 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

of the men and women who ought to be most interested. It is not easy to work and labor for the betterment of those who cannot help themselves, and then preserve anything like patience at their stupid unappreciativeness. It is not easy to struggle day by day to live up to high moral standards, and be patient with the many on all hands who are flippantly careless and seem to enjoy it. One may be convinced that the right must conquer finally, and still be scarcely able to contain oneself waiting for the conquest. So there is danger of becoming cynically critical of others who do not grasp the same point of view. No doubt is sustained about the soundness of the convictions, and therefore there is a readiness to consign everybody indiscriminately to complete and final oblivion who does not heartily agree with them. Many a man has been admirably firm on his convictions, but has sadly interfered with their influence upon his neighbors by his bitter intolerance of everything else. They know they are right and whoever differs with them is inexcusably wrong. They recklessly lose their tempers at the first sign of opposition. In general, they have no patience for anybody who evinces the slightest evidence of disagreement. Naturally their impatience convinces no one, but rather antagonizes, and their resoluteness becomes unpleasantly brittle.

But apart from these extreme cases of impatience, there is an impatient spirit abroad today, rising out of comparatively trivial matters, which is not a little contagious. The habit of impatience over frequent vexatious trifles may be no particular crime, but it is a periodic and jerky strain upon

that deeper patience which counts for much in the make-up of character. This impatient spirit is strongly encouraged by the changing, shifting tendency of the present day. The "old homestead" idea, for example, has suffered a serious lapse in recent years, and the modern family is a nomadic institution of uncertain location. The latest improvements are always urging a change of abode, and it comes to be a simple matter to lose all patience with one's surroundings on the least provocation. In the old days it was the custom for young men to be apprenticed to certain lines of work and then to devote their lives to that work. But nowadays young men and women are largely in a state of migration from one kind of employment to another, and become so much the more quickly impatient with their work. They don't "settle" as rapidly today as they did in the times gone by. Also the very facilities which make modern life easier tend to increase impatience, for they accelerate the whole course of living, and the faster people live the more they are vexed with every pause. When something interferes with the operation of modern conveniences, they are impatient not so much because they cannot get on without them, but because they expected them to act properly and their expectations have been destroyed. If, for instance, some delay retards a journey on a railroad or street car, they are exasperated and impatient, and probably in the majority of cases it is not because they must reach their destination at a specific time, but because they had anticipated an uninterrupted trip and their anticipations are frustrated. Or if their gas

150 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

or electricity or mail or telegraph service fails them temporarily, they will likely feel a trifle hurt and become very impatient, not because any one of these things is absolutely essential (for usually they manage to get on somehow without them), but because they have counted on them and their plans must all be altered.

It is in this way that hope and patience come to be closely allied virtues. One's patience is apt to vary in some sort of proportion to the strength of one's hopes. The man who is hopeful will be patient with the way things go, in expectation of the time when his hopes will be fulfilled. But once let his hopes be thoroughly shattered, and he will be either despondent or rebellious, but he will not be patient. That is one of the chief assets of the clever trickster. As long as he can keep his victims encouraged with false hopes, they will patiently endure all manner of robbery.

Fortunately there is reason to believe that (like courage) much more patience lives in the world than appears on the surface. The sight of that cheery perseverance with which multitudes of men and women plow their way through discouragements and difficulties is convincing evidence that patience is far from exhausted. Down in the inner recesses of nearly everyone's life there is a little spark of hope which somehow keeps itself alive. It may be badly smothered and practically obscured by the hostile shadows of untoward circumstances, but every now and then it gleams up with a little flame of hesitating expectation. No matter how depressing and unpromising conditions may be, that person is a rare exception who will

not instinctively respond even to a vague possibility of better things. Some may call it merely a desperate catching at straws if they like, but nevertheless the impulse to catch is prompted by a touch of hope somewhere. If it were not so, it is inconceivable how many brave spirits can plod blindly onward as they do, with prospects of little else than increased hardships. In spite of every indication to the contrary they still persist in hoping that something may yet turn up to clear the way, and, in that hope, slippery as it may seem, they find a wonderful store of patience.

Such hopeful patience most certainly should not be endangered. It needs, rather, a bit of conservation. For the impatience over trifles, of which we have spoken above, is not at all conducive to its preservation. The alarming number of suicides in nearly every civilized country today, and especially in the great cities of the world, is a warning against the spirit of impatience which the conditions of modern life have the power to induce. Life itself often depends largely upon patience, and where it does not, the happiness of life does. By this is not meant a half-dead submission to something we call Fate. That may bring a numbed disregard of suffering, but it has no possible power to bring happiness. The hopeful patience which is to be conserved means the ability to endure adverse conditions by reason of a strong and clear hope for something much greater than the adversities.

There lies one, at least, of the most practical functions of religion. It gives a living hope of something far above the things of mortal life and

152 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

thereby imparts patience for the enduring of all things. Christian hope offers no exemption from human hardships, but it gives assurance of their transitoriness by pointing to the eternal benefits involved, and gives strength to bear them. The Christian does not overlook his troubles, he looks over them, and catches a vision of Him whose patience was tried to the uttermost but who never surrendered. Even in the most faithless and godless generation the Christian does not flash out an impatient resentment against an unbelieving world, for his face is set toward the Hope of the Ages and he can afford to be patient with things as they are because of his confidence in that which must be. To be sure, he will not pass by any opportunities for the conquest of wrong and the triumph of right. He will leave no stone unturned in doing his part to instill Christian principles into the lives of his fellowmen. But in it all he will be patient and will make no attempt to force a premature fulfillment of the Divine Will. Invincible resoluteness supplemented with the patience of a great hope gives compelling force to human character and irresistible impetus to Christian service. "Quit you like men, be strong."¹⁴ "In your patience ye shall win your souls."¹⁵

¹⁴ I Cor. 16: 13.

¹⁵ St. Luke 21: 19.

IX

HIS CHEERFULNESS AND HIS SORROW

IX

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IT has been frequently remarked that in the whole of the Gospel accounts it is not recorded once that our Lord laughed or indeed that He even smiled. The Gospels give a wonderful picture of Christ in these various characteristics of which we have spoken in the preceding chapters, and it would be difficult to imagine that the picture should be left as incomplete as it would necessarily be were there nothing to show His cheerfulness. It may, for a moment, seem strange that a little laughter and a few smiles should not have been included to bring out this one characteristic. But one is obliged to recall that the Evangelists made no pretense of writing biographies. Their purpose was to record those acts and words of our Lord upon which the Gospel message itself rested. There undoubtedly were innumerable other details known to these writers which for brevity and conciseness, if for no other reasons, would have to be omitted in preparing their records, as is clearly intimated at the close of St. John's Gospel.¹ It may be that the Evangelists took these things (the laughter and smiles) for granted, and therefore saw no need for incorporating them into their records. At any rate, it is scarcely to be believed that they ever intended to convey a picture of the

¹ St. John 21:25.

156 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

Saviour of the World in whom there was no cheerfulness or sense of humor.

There are some situations described in the Gospels wherein Christ could hardly be imagined without a genial smile at the very least. No such direct references enter into the accounts, but the circumstances of the case naturally call for it, and it would be necessary to do violence to the whole spirit of the incidents if it were to be entirely omitted. Can it be supposed that He ever could have received the little children as He did, taking them in His arms and blessing them, without smiling into their upturned faces? ² It would be almost beyond the possibility of imagination. Or can it be supposed that He could have spent that evening at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, where all was brightness and joy and laughter, and have failed utterly to enter into the spirit of the occasion Himself? ³ That also is quite contrary to all that could reasonably be expected. Or again, can it possibly be imagined that He could have been on such intimate terms of friendship as the Gospels indicate with Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, and that He could have visited frequently at their home, without laughing with them in their pleasures as well as weeping with them in their sorrows? ⁴ That would be a strange idea to assume of His friendship. It is impossible to see how the people could have been drawn to Him as they were if He had been morose or unresponsive to their genial good-nature. There was probably a touch

² St. Mk. 10: 13-16.

³ St. John 2: 1-11.

⁴ St. Luke 10: 38-42; St. John 11 and 12: 1-11. Cf. also St. Mt. 21: 17 and St. Mk. 11: 11.

of real humor in many of His remarks which to-day are taken with rather too literal seriousness. Most sensible people in their ordinary daily lives seek out and enjoy the company of the cheerful ones, and if it is at all possible they avoid the gloomy ones. Cheerful Christ must have been, or those people who trod the streets and hills and valleys of Palestine with Him would never have given Him such spontaneous affection. There must have been a refreshing difference between His happy freedom and the dull rigidity with which the Pharisees clamped the life out of their religion.

Picture the incident of Christ coming to His Apostles over the waves of the Sea of Galilee. They had left Him alone in the mountain in prayer, and at His direction had set out in their little boat in the darkness of the night. The Sea of Galilee at best is a treacherous little body of water, for the winds sweep unexpectedly down from the surrounding hills and play in uncertain eddies over its surface. Storms of some violence come and go with great rapidity. It is easy to imagine, therefore, that men sailing out into its depths on a dark night might under any circumstances be at something of a nervous tension. But these men had been through strange experiences that day, and must have had unaccustomed thoughts hurrying through their minds. Not long after they had started a sharp wind blew up against them and the waves began to rise. The combination of circumstances no doubt made them more apprehensive than usual. Then suddenly out of the blackness of the sea they saw the Master's figure approaching them. A shrinking fear came

158 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

over them, and there is no telling what weird ideas may have flashed through their minds. What would have been the result if Christ had spoken to them in somber, solemn tones at such a time as that? What, if He had uttered, with a hollow voice, some fearfully ominous warnings? He might have done so, had He been nothing more than a religious upstart eager to impress a mysterious awe upon His followers. But that description would hardly fit Christ. Such words from Him then would never have made the Apostles clamor for Him to come to them in the boat, nor would they have led the "impetuous Peter" to set out from the boat to come to Him. It was a cheering, reassuring message which He gave them, one which steadied their shaking knees and their trembling lips—"Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."⁵ And surely there must have been a happy, joyful ring to His voice as He said it.

Without losing that picture of our Lord, the page may be turned and the reader sees Him in the better known representation of the "Man of Sorrows." It is in this capacity that the majority of people would recognize Him most easily, for as the Suffering Servant He has been most frequently portrayed. Usually that means Christ on Calvary—Christ enduring the humiliation of the Cross. But no such specific limitations should be applied to the title, for He had other sorrows than those which came to Him directly from the bitter attacks of His enemies. Many times Christ felt the keenest of sorrow for the people themselves quite

⁵ St. Mt. 14: 27.

apart from any immediate effect it may have had upon Him. At the grave of His friend Lazarus He wept in deep sympathy with the sorrowful sisters.⁶ That day when He looked out with yearning eyes over the city of Jerusalem which was rejecting Him and His message, He cried out in sorrow, not for the pain and misery they were about to bring upon Him, but in anticipation of those fearful calamities which He knew were overshadowing the city.⁷ He grieved deeply over the wealthy young ruler who had many splendid qualities but who was seeking an easy way into the Kingdom of God.⁸ His heart was heavy as He saw the approaching defection of the Apostle Judas⁹—as indeed the heart of Christ must have been heavy many times since at the inexcusable waywardness of His people.

This is a kind of sorrow which every earnest man or woman must experience sometimes. It takes the most brazen indifference to escape all sorrow over the wrong-doings of others. There are those who apparently can continue serenely on doing what they consider to be their duty, and never feel a particle disturbed because others are blatantly disregarding theirs. People who have that faculty cannot at the same time have a true conception of what their duty really is. They not only should, but must, have a much more enthusiastic belief in their duties. Their Christian life should be so close and so real to them that it will hurt when they see other people trespassing on the high principles of Christ. He Himself felt such

⁶ St. John 11:35.

⁷ St. Luke 19:41.

⁸ St. Mk. 10:17-22.

⁹ St. Mt. 26:20-25.

160 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

sorrow keenly. Yet it never destroyed or broke down His own cheerfulness. It served rather to deepen it. For His sorrow was never of the helpless or despondent sort, not even in those last critical days when nearly every hand was being turned against Him, when guile and subtlety temporarily held sway, and when Calvary stared Him in the face. In spite of all this concentration of ungodly activity He knew that the love of God was still abounding in the world, and that even though obscured for the moment, there were yet good grounds for being cheerful.

The demand for a cheerful Christianity is being made more widely today than in times past, and it is well that it is so. It is not so very long since that many Christian people were deeply influenced by an exaggerated predestinarianism to the point where Christianity sank almost to actual fatalism. There is a cold lifelessness about such a religion, for it takes everything for granted and gives little or no room for active initiative. It is conducive not so much to sorrow and sadness as to gloom, and nothing in the world can be so thoroughly gloomy as religion when it is gloomy. Probably the most fear-inspiring and mind-torturing impressions under which men have labored have been products of distorted religious notions. Used aright it makes man supremely happy; misused it makes him unutterably miserable. There is little in the way of inspiration to be found in a gloomy religious outlook, and if any one thing is needed in life today, and very likely in other days equally so, it is inspiration—a stimulating encouragement for higher and better things. There certainly must be cheer-

fulness in such inspiration or it simply cannot inspire. The Spirit of God never breathed a message from on high into human life, no matter how severe or reproachful a message it might be, without breathing in with it something of cheer. Even the most denunciatory of the Old Testament prophets carry with them a strain of cheerful hope for future possibilities by virtue of their inevitable faith in God. It is quite evident to the observer of prevailing conditions in real life today, that it is the cheerful men and women who are doing the inspiring. Here comes a man with a vision, and there is joy for that man in the simple possession of that vision. But joy uncommunicated soon reacts upon itself, and therefore he teaches his friends and neighbors the advantage of his vision by showing them the happiness and cheerfulness it has brought into his life. So he inspires them to seek a similar vision. That is what Christianity ought to be doing on every hand or its greatest value is being sadly obscured. The very knowledge that Jesus Christ has found His way into one's life ought to be enough to make that life fairly scintillate with the Good News. No better missionary work can be done. There is no more effective way by which the Gospel can be brought home to untouched lives than by manifest cheerfulness on the part of those who have already received it. Christianity must be made and kept attractive. It need never be made conspicuously showy and loud and ill-mannered. It need never descend to exerting unworthy pressure, either by threats or inducements, upon people to receive it. But it is necessary to make unmistakably evident

162 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

the fact that whatever in God's creation is worth while, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is pre-eminently so. And the cheerful and happy Christian is the best possible witness to that fact. People want to be happy, and they must be taught that Christ can make them happy.

The trouble with very many is that though they want to be happy they simply do not know how. Happiness finds its home in the deep places of one's life, and there is many a life with depths quite unsounded. Not infrequently it takes something as keen as a sharp sorrow to break through the superficial crust under which one's real life lies unexplored. That is one way at least in which temporary sorrow and ultimate happiness come into one's life hand in hand.

There may be a great many reasons for the failure of different people to secure happiness. Some live in a state of chronic discontent where nothing pleases and everything is vile. Sometimes it becomes so habitual that they actually seem to derive a few bits of unwholesome pleasure out of their very grumblings. There are also some who become despondently resigned to a hard lot, and would consider it the height of presumption to seek a remedy. Some, again, have become embittered and deliberately avoid all that gives pleasure to others, with a savage desire to afflict themselves in every possible way and make themselves martyrs to a cruel world. But such as these are the exceptions. The vast majority are eager to be happy and are ever on the alert for any undiscovered way of increasing their happiness. The reason why so many of them fail is not because they make

too few attempts, but because they do not know how to enjoy themselves.

The want of opportunities can scarcely offer even a plausible excuse, for the ways and means of enjoyment today have multiplied almost beyond enumeration. Places of amusement and entertainment of all descriptions throw wide their doors to the public, not only in large centers of population but out through the smaller towns and villages and even into the country districts as well. Summer and winter resorts continue to draw their more or less fashionable patronage, and at the same time free parks, free bathing beaches, free concerts, etc., are being provided on more and more extensive scales for those who are unable to avail themselves of the more expensive means of enjoyment. The double question of suppressing the undesirable amusement resorts and offering legitimate amusements in place of them which will be equally attractive, is occupying the serious attention of many social workers. There must be these facilities for enjoying oneself, but at the same time the mere fact that one takes advantage of the facilities is no assurance that one will really derive happiness. People set about enjoying themselves in different ways, but there are at least a few kinds of people who seek their enjoyment along certain lines with which everyone is familiar. A moment's thought will make it clear why these with all their rounds of amusement never really enjoy themselves and do not become really happy.

In the first place are those, chiefly men, who endure amusements out of a sense of duty. It is part of the plan of life they have adopted to give about

so much time at stated intervals to diversion, on the principle that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." They religiously take their annual vacation even though they may not know what to do with it when they get it. Possibly they will spend a few days in the country or at a watering-place not because they anticipate any particular pleasure, but because they believe it will be good for them to get away from their business. Then they sit on the porch of a summer hotel and almost unconsciously begin to figure the financial possibilities of the surrounding landscape. With a sigh of relief they return to the office and take up another season's work, interrupted by occasional submission to society functions which it would be impolite to refuse. This is one class of men who have not learned how to enjoy themselves.

Then there are others. There are those who devote themselves to amusements. They make a business out of it. They consider it either a slight or a disgrace if they are not invited to every social event which goes on anywhere about them. If it is not one thing, it is something else, but the main idea is never to be idle in the search for entertainment. Of course when diversions come to be the rule, they cease to be diversions. One may be amused to the point of satiety and then nothing at all has the power to amuse. The unceasing pursuit of entertainment soon becomes distinctly hard labor, and the pursuers are obliged periodically to stop everything and do nothing for a season while their enervated faculties regain their normal composure. Looking at it from the other side, a considerable percentage of the entertaining done in society cir-

cles is done not so much with a distinct desire to confer pleasure upon friends as it is for the purpose of meeting social obligations. Here again are others who have not learned really how to enjoy themselves.

In addition to these might be mentioned the ones who seek their enjoyment in a frivolous, trifling way. They are always on the watch for the latest amusement novelty, and flit from one to another until their minds become a jumble of unrelated sensations. One week they are wildly enthusiastic about one diversion, and the next week it is quite forgotten in a more fascinating one. They are deeply distressed if any of the popular means of entertainment escape them, for then there will be subjects of conversation in which they can have no part. It is thrills they crave, and when the ability to thrill them has once been worn out of an amusement, it is only fit to be discarded. They can tell with marvelous rapidity and at wonderful length of their most recent attempts to break the monotony of life, and when they have finished their hearers are probably wondering what it all means. These also have never learned really how to enjoy themselves. They have only gained proficiency in keeping up to date.

The point is that men and women enjoy things only as they reach into them and find something which they may incorporate into their very lives and retain as a personal possession. And therein lies the secret of happiness. The reason some people are profoundly happy with very few means of enjoyment, while others are thoroughly unhappy who have endless opportunities of amusement at

their disposal, is because the former know how to extract the meat out of their few pleasures and the latter touch their many pleasures only on the surface. The man who acquires real happiness out of his experiences is the man who personally appropriates his enjoyments, and as he makes them his own he brightens up his own life so that it sheds its happiness over the lives it touches. Some people will describe their travels or their other pleasures in such a way as to make everyone else envious that they should have good things of which others are deprived. Others, however, will bring their pleasures to share with their friends, and will make the friends feel some of the true benefits of their enjoyments. Happiness cannot be grasped, it must be absorbed, and then it radiates of its own volition. Of course the character of the pleasures one seeks to enjoy will make a difference, sometimes very large. Some men through a perversion of taste revel in cruelty and brutality and seek their pleasures in watching or participating in brutal recreations. Nero, Rome's cruel and capricious emperor, was hugely delighted at the tortures of the Christians, but it made him no better a companion. He might assimilate the very heart of such amusements, but the effect upon his character would not be of a kind to induce much happiness among his friends. There are also some who think they are never having a good time unless they clear the bounds of decency and engage in various immoralities. Here also the heartiest appropriation of the pleasures will hardly enhance one's ability to distribute happiness. But legitimate pleasures and recreations do offer possibilities of true happi-

ness if they are approached not superficially but receptively with a life wherein the depths are accessible. Happiness must strike deep.

That is why it seems safe to say that honestly accepted Christianity is the greatest source of abiding happiness there is. If accepted honestly, it penetrates at once into the innermost recesses of a man's life and there breeds happiness in the one place where it thrives. This is one reason why cheerfulness in the character of Jesus Christ is a simple necessity.

Yet, as we have seen above, the life of the Master was not one round of glittering pleasures. There was also the sorrow. Now sorrow is a mystery. It is one of the things most earnestly avoided on all hands, and yet it has often been the chief cause of a very beautiful life. It may not suit one's personal desires, but there are such countless instances of good working out of sorrow that one does not dare proclaim it totally wrong. Many a wild and reckless life has been checked by a sorrow and turned into avenues of wholesome goodness. Many a wrong has been atoned for because a touch of sorrow turned somebody into a penitent. As was suggested above, there is a kind of sorrow which every honest man must experience. If he is sincerely concerned about the right, he will be saddened by seeing cases where the wrong prevails. He will not dare be indifferent, neither will he dare keep his own righteousness strictly to himself. He is under obligations to feel sensibly distressed when he sees dishonesty and falsehood and unrighteousness swarming up to temporary victories. He will have faith in the final triumph of

168 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

right, but it will cause him sorrow to see men and women fall by the wayside. More than that, he should feel sorrow for his own mistakes and shortcomings. Too much indulgence of a man's wrong-doing is no kindness to the man. A sense of regret is necessary to a proper change of attitude.

But there are other kinds of sorrows which enter the lives of all sorts of people apparently indiscriminately. The righteous have their sorrows to bear as well as the unrighteous, the good as well as the bad. That is where the mystery becomes most inscrutable. St. Paul suggests the direction along which it may very likely be solved when in one of his letters he makes an apt distinction between ungodly sorrow and godly sorrow. The latter draws men so much closer to their God, while the former separates them from Him.¹⁰ The difference, of course, lies within the men. The same sorrow may be godly or ungodly according to the way in which it is received. The gist of it all is simply this—that God is somewhere in every sorrow if the sufferers will only seek for and find Him. It may not be easy; it may be very hard. But it is one of those things which make life blaze with a perfect halo of restful happiness, and therefore it must be hard, as anything is which is worth while. What it does is to bring cheerfulness straight into the very center of sorrow. It is a cheerfulness built upon faith and is of the unquenchable sort. “I pray that you may never, never ‘get over’ the sorrow, but get through it, into it, into the very heart of God.”¹¹

¹⁰ II Cor. 7: 10.

¹¹ Forbes Robinson—“Letters to His Friends,” p. 69.

It is told of a famous artist of the olden days that while he was decorating the ceiling of a chapel he was asked to stop his work and remove the scaffolding when he was only partially done. From below nothing could be seen but rough boards and ragged ends of rope, and the authorities wished to see how the work was progressing. The artist, knowing that his work would suffer, refused to stop and went complacently on with his painting. When he had finished, the scaffold was removed and a beautiful and inspiring picture greeted the eyes of those who entered the chapel. It is a parable of life. If it were possible to tear away the sorrows and troubles and discouragements which arise in life's way, in a hasty desire to know why it all must be so, there would be revealed only a poor, unfinished picture of life behind them. It would leave a dull conviction that life was in no way worth while, that the wretched result was a sorry recompense for the efforts put forth. But if the outcome is left in the hands of the Great Artist, it is bound to be a masterpiece when the final scaffolding shall be removed. The unsightly boards and the frayed ends of rope may all be in evidence, but the watchers will be cheerful in spite of them, with the knowledge that for all their unwelcome presence they represent mere episodes in the journey toward the final goal.

Here is the two-fold message which Christ gives and illustrates by His own life, of Christian cheerfulness and Christian sorrow. To think of Him only as the Man of Sorrows would give out a Christianity of morbid cast, but to think of Him with no sorrows at all would give a religion out of

170 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

touch with the facts of life. Taken together they meet man's deepest needs. On the first Palm Sunday there were joyous shouts and resounding cheers for the Master as He rode into Jerusalem. Then within the week they hung Him on the Cross. In the rejoicing He was cheerful, and there is reason to believe that in His suffering He was also cheerful. Possibly He did not smile when they put the crown of thorns upon His brow. Possibly He did not laugh when they laid the Cross upon His shoulder. But through it all there was certainly a great peace in His heart for the light of an assured faith never died away. So it was that out of the darkest darkness of Calvary there broke forth the glory of the resurrection. The last beam of the scaffolding was removed and the victorious Christ was revealed in His majesty.

Somewhere in the midst of all this are excellent grounds for a strong and unwavering cheerfulness among Christian people. Out of it there emerges at least the possibility that Christianity can produce an experience of truly substantial happiness. Could such a spirit be made and kept dominant in Christian circles, complaints would sink to a minimum and the world would be considerably brightened. Christ died for men and women, and as they share in the spirit of His sufferings they will be unable to escape from a sense of happy gratitude to God for Him who laid down His life upon earth that He might raise mankind into the Kingdom of Heaven.

X

CONCLUSION

X

CONCLUSION

IN the preceding chapters we have endeavored to find certain contrasts in the character of Jesus Christ, and to derive some practical lessons from them. Each contrast has its own special bearing on some phase of modern life, and will be seriously hindered in producing its beneficial effects if both sides of it are not maintained. Also there are certain conclusions which seem naturally to resolve themselves out of each contrast when applied to the life of today. But in addition to these there is one general conclusion which arises from the fact of the contrasts themselves. When contrasts are found working together in complete harmony, as they do in the character of Christ, there is a resulting condition of momentous benefit which may be summed up in the single word—*balance*. The Master's life is in every way the supreme example of exquisite balance. His life was never warped or distorted or twisted out of its course by unwise yielding to discordant influences. It preserved an even poise throughout, and lost no power by impetuous blunders. There was a clear, clean, intelligent balance in His words and works which stood away from fanaticism on the one side and an indefinite excitement on the other. There is no intimation of a half-way, on-the-fence policy which is neither one thing nor the other—a calcu-

174 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

lating, temporizing desire to escape trouble—for Christ did not hesitate to speak plainly and put plenty of force back of His words. He was instigated by no jealousy or envy such as would obstruct His vision and inflict upon Him a biased judgment. He was never sentimentally lenient, and also He was never vindictively virulent. He was fair in His treatment of all who came to Him, for the harmonious contrasts of His character gave Him an abundance of clear-sighted balance.

To some, the possession of balance might not seem to be a matter of any particular moment, but with a little reflection its importance will probably increase amazingly. For, after all, how very few people there are who have it: how few there are of really well-balanced judgment. There are so many new ideas cropping up on all sides today, and such untrammelled freedom in expressing them, that many minds are beclouded and confused and lose their sense of proportion in grasping after all the novelties. The vast majority of human troubles grow out of mistakes in judgment. When a person has committed a blunder and it is all over, he admits that he should have known better than to have done or said what he did, but either he did not stop to think or else he thought wrongly. Sifted down, it is merely a case of ill-balanced judgment. That is why it is never enough to know that a man is well-informed if he is to be intrusted with responsible duties, or that he is earnest or energetic or quick or persevering. He might be blessed with all these admirable qualifications and yet make the most weird and inexplicable mistakes. The great leaders of affairs in the world

today would probably agree that they are seeking, above all else, men of plain common sense—by which they mean men of balance. They want men who will not lose their heads, who will not do things first and think about them afterward. Or, to state it in terms of this discussion, they want men in whose characters contrasts are harmoniously united to the point of a steady balance.

It will not do to speak lightly or flippantly about common sense and balance, for they are by no means such simple things to acquire. The modern man is living in an age of extremes, and it takes a really level-headed person to keep from being whirled away by one of the latest fads. In times gone by the radical man was the exception, and good home-bodies spoke with bated breath of the man of radical views. Today he is on all hands. People no longer express surprise to hear that a man is a radical, they simply wonder what kind. This fact is undoubtedly one of the signs of progress, and is not at all reprehensible in itself so long as men do not accept radicalism merely for its own sake. To some men a touch of antiquity is a veritable brand of infamy upon a custom or institution of any kind. They would practically make the world all over again and reconstruct humanity according to their own notions, which would involve the strict elimination of everything as it used to be. But the usual radical is simply one who is willing to go a little further and a trifle faster than his neighbor. And in this sense it must be admitted that it is the radicals who pull the world ahead. At the same time there is a measure of caution to be maintained lest they run away with the world

176 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

and everyone else at the same time, rushing unrestrained over unproved roads which might lead into quagmires or land them in a blind alley. But the point we are making is that because of the multiplicity of radical ideas and doctrines of the present time, it demands a very well balanced judgment to preserve a sane and comprehensive outlook on the whole situation. In times past there may have been many more extremists than one might imagine, but they generally suffered vigorous suppression. They were conceded no such freedom of speech as they enjoy today, and they did not have the modern facilities of publicity.

Today one is met with a din of cries urging one to advocate this cause or that, and the conscientious man may well find some difficulty in ascertaining just where to begin and where to stop. If he is not endowed with some balance, he will soon become hopelessly bewildered. It is not hard for an agitator to arouse enthusiasm and get a following for almost any cause, but it is a different matter to educate people to balanced judgment. It is often a heart-rending task to sustain enthusiasm after it has once begun, but waves of it are rising and falling every day. An eloquent appeal delivered by an able man will frequently stir people to a very high pitch in a very few minutes of time, but balance is rooted in character and is not susceptible to forced growth. Without it the average person will certainly be lacking in equilibrium, and will probably be tumbling ungracefully about, mentally, morally and also spiritually.

For one thing, in these days of much intellectual activity, there is bound to be need for good intel-

lectual balance. Intellectually the world of today is in a lively, almost tumultuous, condition. The past three or four generations have brought more in the way of exact and accurate scientific knowledge than practically as many centuries preceding. Vast stores of new data have been uncovered and many unlooked-for modifications, if not actual reversals, of scientific theories have been brought about. Many and varied far-reaching discoveries have been made, and whole new fields for future investigation have been opened up. It has come to be really a stupendous task to keep in close touch with the general progress of intellectual achievement of the present day. The tremendously large field of activity and the numerous interesting and promising avenues which run over it in every direction make it increasingly easy to become intellectually unbalanced. Men are apt to become so deeply interested in certain lines of investigation that, in spite of the interaction of the sciences, they see everything through glasses of their own color. To the chemist everything tends to be interpreted in terms of his chemistry; to the physiologist, in physiological terms; to the psychologist, in terms of his psychology—and so on. It is quite possible for men to become so immersed in their special departments of knowledge that they forget the existence of such a thing as intellectual context. Every science stands in a universal context, conditioned or supplemented or somehow affected by every other science. Therefore all scientific knowledge must be kept in a similar universal context, and no knowledge of any kind will be immutably correct until all things in the universe are known.

178 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

This is readily perceived with a moment's reflection upon many of the undisputed scientific beliefs of the ancients which were quite reasonable in their day, but which with a larger field of knowledge have become completely obsolete. The same facts are seen today, but they are seen in a trifle more of universal context. New developments will in their turn eventually make obsolete many of the present accepted theories. That is why no one dares revel in more than a moderate amount of intellectual dogmatism. So it becomes apparent that the good scientist will be a man of large vision, that he will see things in universal perspective, not at too close range, and that he will keep in mind not only the marvelous extent of human knowledge, but also the far more marvelous extent of what is, so far, human ignorance. The good scientist will be a man of carefully preserved intellectual balance.

But the intellectual balance will be needed not only for the scientist, but also for the average man who of necessity depends upon the conclusions of the scientist for the bulk of his own knowledge. He must be able to discriminate between opinions and statements of fact. Much that goes under the label of "scientifically proved" is nothing more than opinions deduced by certain individuals from certain known facts. Science has to do with the facts but never with the opinions about them. It states, for instance, that the combination of certain elements in certain proportions will produce a liquid called water, but science offers no explanation as to where these laws originate or why they operate or what the meaning and purpose of it all

may be. The Christian will believe that a Divine Creator has made all such things possible and that they exist to serve a Divine purpose, but he will need other than scientific grounds for his belief. The materialist will believe that it is all the blind working of natural forces with no definite and final purpose necessarily involved, but he also will have to believe on other than scientific grounds. Religion need never have any quarrel with science. It is the philosophical interpretation of scientific facts with which religion is sometimes forced into disagreement. It is at this point that men and women need to keep themselves clear-headed and well-balanced in their judgment lest they confuse what is really known with what people say about it.

Intellectual, however, is not the only kind of balance which needs safeguarding in these days. A strong emphasis is needed on moral stability. Considering modern life as a whole, the present age is one of exceptional prosperity, and with prosperity the tendency arises toward a weakening of moral principle. When wealth and success are the goals to be sought, then men come to be judged not by standards of character but by their proximity to these goals, and not too many embarrassing questions are asked as to how the coveted positions were gained. A semblance of moral standards is maintained, but it is all well surrounded with avenues of escape. There are too many double standards today. Certain things are wrong on general principles—so the modern idea runs—but in most cases there are extenuating circumstances. Consequently the law books become

180 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

crowded with scores of ordinances which are never put into effect. There is one standard of personal purity for women and quite another for men. There is one standard of honesty which is broken by the highwayman or the house-breaker, but a very different one to be tampered with by the embezzler, the defaulter or the tricky manipulator of other people's money. It is wrong to knock a man down and rob him, but it is merely shrewd to inveigle a man into giving up his money with little or no security. If only enough loopholes can be found in the law to save a man from conviction, the culprit need have no sense of shame, on the false assumption that because it was impossible to find him guilty, therefore he has been proved innocent. Morality is thus made to spread itself out over a great expanse of ground, but it is given no very sure foothold anywhere. It is wanting in stability.

Outside of its legal aspects the same stability calls for attention in the matter of personal responsibility. As long as men are not legally culpable they feel able to comfort themselves with an assumed exemption from all moral responsibility. In this category will be included all that large number of persons who defeat good measures by their inactivity. Here are also included those who feel no obligation to exercise reasonable care and who through sheer carelessness work quantities of havoc in the lives of those about them. Consider the man who in a reckless spirit of daring will take ridiculous chances with his very life, totally unconcerned with the helpless state in which his wife and family would be left in the event of a possible

fatality. Or consider the other man who plunges headlong into a risky speculation with no regard whatever for the possibility of bringing those dependent upon him to a state of practical poverty. Consider the mothers who neglect their children, the wives who neglect their homes, the officials who are indifferent to their duties, the workmen who shirk their tasks. Small things they may be, but let them increase and keep on increasing and the time will come when moral stability will disappear from among men.

Another aspect of the need for balance appears in the jeopardizing of religious constancy. This is an age of many and varied religions. A few grains of encouragement may be derived from the mere fact that the vast majority of people are really amenable to religious influences, even if they often work through strange and devious channels, but even so religious peregrinations do not cultivate a healthy spiritual life. When Nebuchadnezzar plundered the Temple at Jerusalem and added the accessories of another religion to his temple at Babylon, he was practicing a kind of religious eclecticism on the theory that if some gods were good, more were better. So also with the original Roman Pantheon—if Rome was to be the mistress of the world, then all religions of the world must be gathered into Rome's great temple. But today there is no such logic in the multiplicity of religions. They simply cater to the religious vagaries of men. New cults appear with startling frequency, and in spite of outlandish doctrines and practices they all manage to secure a following. There seems to be an element of spiritually rest-

less ones who are willing converts to the latest religious novelty. In a large measure the new cults thrive on this class. They remain adherents long enough to help establish one leader's claims, and then move on to a more recent aspirant after religious honors. Now, there may be nothing necessarily wrong in changing one's religious or ecclesiastical affiliations. It may be done after careful thought and upon earnest convictions. Every such case must stand on its own individual merits. But the discontented habit of everlastingly traveling from church to church and from one cult to another is bad for the whole spirit of religion. It produces shiftlessness, irregularity, spiritual unsteadiness and many other things which ought not to be. For one of the first and best effects of sound religion is steadiness and confidence.

Religious toleration frequently offers a happy excuse for religious inconstancy. To the modern mind the outgrown spirit of religious intolerance is totally repugnant, and there is every reason to be deeply thankful that it is so. But to be tolerant of other people's views does not mean that one must accept them oneself. Certainly there is no desire for so narrowly restricted a point of view that it becomes impossible to make any allowances for another ; but with equal certainty no one should become a public receptacle of large and willing capacity where any and all views may find a hearty welcome. Religious toleration sometimes becomes only religious haziness. The bigotry which in its way destroys religious balance has been dismissed, but the balance itself has been in no way assured, for it slides up and down in a thoroughly whim-

sical fashion, "tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine." ¹

Here, then, is the conclusion of our reflections. The world today stands, in more ways than one, in great need of balance. In the firmly united and thoroughly harmonious contrasts in the character of Jesus Christ is to be found the highest and most complete exemplification of the well-balanced Man. Therefore it is in Christ and His Gospel that the world will find its needs supplied today. The incomparable symmetry of His life is enough to make people of this day ashamed of their silly extravagances, and to teach them that the beauty of holiness is not merely a pious dream, but is a practical possibility in all the activity of a busy world. Thus it becomes clear how in Him is gathered up all the fullness of humanity. No man can say that his life is beyond the range of the Master's influence, for where one side of a contrast will not reach another will.

The modern world is full of many problems, brought about or at least accentuated by the many different kinds of people to be handled. There are weak ones who need power, and there are brazen ones who need meekness; there are the easy-going, indifferent ones who need severity, and the harsh and cruel who need sympathy; there are the timid who need courage, and there are the brutal ones who need gentleness; there are the hesitating ones who need confidence, and the boasters who need a sense of dependence; there are the lazy in need of energy, and the hysterical in need of repose; there are the crafty beguilers who need simplicity of

¹ Eph. 4: 14.

184 Contrasts in the Character of Christ

heart, and there are the stupid victims who need keenness of insight; there are the waverers who need resoluteness, and the self-sufficient who need patience; there are the gloomy who need to be cheered and the pleasure-seekers who need to be taught the wholesome value of sorrow. With all these brought together in the small world of human experience confusion is sure to abound, and many difficulties arise. It is not until men turn to the Man of Galilee that they see harmony brought out of confusion and the difficulties dispelled. Jesus Christ is still the key to the situation.

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